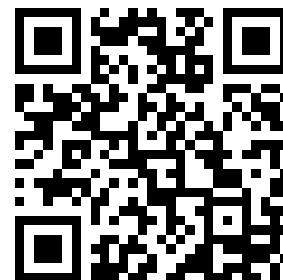


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Bible, English, 1801-03

A

COMMENTARY

ON THE

HOLY BIBLE,

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By THOMAS COKE, LL.D. *1801-03*  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

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C O N T E N T S

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# THE BOOK

OF THE

# PROPHET JEREMIAH.

*THE prophet Jeremiab was of the sacerdotal race, being, as he records himself, one of the priests that dwelt at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, a city appropriated out of that tribe to the use of the priests the sons of Aaron (Josh. xxi. 18.), and situate, as we learn from Jerome, about three miles north of Jerusalem. Some have supposed his father to have been that Hilkiab the high priest, by whom the book of the law was found in the temple in the reign of Josiah; but for this there is no better ground than his having borne the same name, which was no uncommon one among the Jews: whereas, had he been in reality the high priest, he would doubtless have been mentioned by that distinguishing title, and not put upon a level with priests of an ordinary and inferior class. Jeremiab appears to have been very young when he was called to the exercise of the prophetic office; from which he modestly endeavoured to excuse himself by pleading his youth and incapacity; but being overruled by the divine authority, he set himself to discharge the duties of his function with unremitting diligence and fidelity during a period of at least forty-two years, reckoning from the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign. In the course of his ministry he met with great difficulties, and much opposition from his countrymen of all degrees; whose persecution and ill usage sometimes wrought so far upon his mind, as to draw from him expressions, in the bitterness of his soul, which many have thought hard to reconcile with his religious principles; but which, when duly weighed, may be found to demand our pity rather than severe censure. He was, in truth, a man of unblemished piety and conscientious integrity; a warm lover of his country, whose miseries he pathetically deploras; and so affectionately attached to his countrymen, notwithstanding their injurious treatment of him, that he chose rather to abide with them, and undergo all hardships in their company, than separately to enjoy a state of ease and plenty, which the favour of the king of Babylon would have secured to him. At length, after the destruction of Jerusalem, having followed the remnant of the Jews into Egypt, whither they had resolved to retire, though contrary to his advice, upon the murder of Gedaliab, whom the Chaldeans had left governor in Judæa, he there continued warmly to remonstrate against their idolatrous practices, foretelling the consequences which would inevitably follow. But his freedom and zeal are said to have cost him his life; for the Jews at Tabpanbes, as tradition goes, took such offence thereat, that they stoned him to death; which account of the manner of his exit, though not absolutely certain, is at least very likely to be true, considering the temper and disposition of the parties concerned. Their wickedness, however, did not long pass without its reward; for in a few years after they were miserably destroyed by the Babylonian armies, which invaded Egypt, according to the prophet's prediction. Ch. xlv. 27, 28.*

*The following historical sketch of the times in which Jeremiab lived, is given with a view to throw light upon his prophecies in general, and may help to explain sundry circumstances and allusions that are found therein.*

*In the reign of Manasseh every species of impiety and moral corruption had been carried to the highest pitch under the encouragement of royal example; and so thoroughly tainted were the minds of men by this corrupt influence, as to baffle all the endeavours of the good Josiah to bring about a reformation. This pious prince, having in the eighteenth year of his reign accidentally met with the book of the law, was stricken with horror at the danger to which he found himself and his kingdom exposed by the violations of it. He therefore immediately set about removing all the abominations that were in the land, and engaged his subjects to join with him in a solemn covenant to be more dutifully observant of the divine commands for the time to come. But though the king's heart was right, and his zeal fervent and sincere, it was all hypocrisy and dissimulation on the part of the people; their hearts were incorrigibly turned the wrong way; and God, who saw clearly the real bent of their dispositions, was not to be diverted from his designs of vengeance. He began with depriving them, by a sudden stroke, of their excellent prince, under whose government they had enjoyed much happiness and tranquillity, of which they were altogether unworthy. He was slain in a battle with Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt, whom Josiah had gone out to oppose on his march against the Babylonian dominions, being himself in alliance with the king of Babylon; and his death, however fatal to his kingdom, was as to his own particular in some sense perhaps a merciful disposition of Providence, that his eyes might not see all the evil that was coming upon his land.—The first twelve chapters of this book seem to contain all the prophecies delivered in this reign.*

*Josiah being dead, his sons who succeeded him were not of a character to impede or delay the execution of God's judgments. It is said in general of them all, that they did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. The first that mounted the throne was Shallum, or Jehoabaz, the second son, by designation of the people. But his elevation was not of long continuance. Pharaoh Necho, having defeated the Babylonian forces, and taken Carchemish, on his return deposed Jehoabaz, after a reign of three months, and, putting him in chains, carried him to Egypt, whence he never returned.—In this short reign Jeremiah does not appear to have had any revelation.*

*Pharaoh Necho made use of his victory to reduce all Syria under his subjection; and having imposed a fine upon the kingdom of Judah of one hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold, he received the money from Jehoikim, the eldest son of Josiah, whom he appointed king in his brother's stead. Jehoikim was one of the worst and wickedest of all the kings of Judah; a man totally destitute of all regard for religion, and unjust, rapacious, cruel, and tyrannical in his government. In the beginning of his reign he put Urijah, a prophet of God, to death, for having prophesied, as was his duty to do, of the impending calamities of Judah and Jerusalem. And having either built for himself a new palace, or enlarged the old one which belonged to the kings of Judah, by a strain of authority not less mean than wicked, he withheld from the workmen the wages which they had earned in building it. In short, he set no bounds to his evil inclinations and passions; and his people, freed from the wholesome discipline which had restrained them in his father's time, were not behindhand with him in giving way to every sort of licentious extravagance. Three years he reigned without molestation or disturbance from abroad. But towards the latter end of his third year, Nebuchadnezzar, being associated in the government by his father Nabopolassar king of Babylon, was sent into Syria to recover the dismembered provinces of the Babylonish empire. In the fourth year of Jehoikim he beat the Egyptian army at the river Euphrates, retook Carchemish, and, having subdued all the intermediate country, appeared before Jerusalem, of which he soon made himself master. Jehoikim was at first loaded with chains, with an intention of sending him to Babylon. He was, however, released upon his submission, and again suffered to reign on taking an oath to be a true servant of the king of Babylon. But numbers of his people were sent captives to Babylon, together with several children of the blood royal, and of the first families of Judah, whom Ne-*

*buchadnezzar*

*Nebuchadnezzar proposed to breed up in his own court, in order to employ them afterwards in the affairs of his empire. At the same time many of the sacred vessels were taken away, and deposited in the temple of Belus at Babylon; so that from this date the desolation of Judah may fairly be reckoned to have had its beginning.*

*After the king of Babylon's departure, Jehoiakim continued to pay him homage and tribute for three years. In the mean time both he and his people persisted in their evil courses, undismayed by the mischiefs which had already befallen them, and making light of the threatenings which God, by the ministry of his prophets, repeatedly denounced against them. At length Jehoiakim refused to pay any longer the tribute assigned him, and broke out into open revolt. To chastise him, the king of Babylon, not being at leisure to come in person, directed his vassals of the neighbouring provinces, the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, to join with the Chaldean troops which were on the frontiers, and to ravage the land of Judah. They did so for three years together, and carried off abundance of people from the open country, who were sent to Babylon. Jehoiakim, in some attempt, as it should seem, made by him to check these depredations, was himself slain without the gates of Jerusalem; and his dead body, having been dragged along the ground with the greatest ignominy, was suffered to remain without burial in the open fields.—The prophecies of this reign are continued on from the 13th to the 20th chapter inclusively, to which we must add the 22d, 23d, 25th, 26th, 35th, and 36th chapters, together with the 45th, 46th, 47th, and most probably the 48th, and as far as to ver. 34. of the 49th chapter.*

*Jehoiachin the son of Jehoiakim, a youth of eighteen years old, succeeded his father in the throne, and followed his evil example, as far as the shortness of his reign would admit. From the beginning of it Jerusalem was closely blocked up by the Babylonian generals. At the end of three months Nebuchadnezzar joined his army in person, and upon his arrival Jehoiachin surrendered himself and his city at discretion. He was transported directly to Babylon with his mother, his family, and friends, and with them all the inhabitants of the land of any note or account. The treasures also of the temple, and of the king's house, and all the golden vessels which Solomon had provided for the temple service, were at this time carried away.—We read of no prophecy which Jeremiah actually delivered in this king's reign; but the fate of Jehoiachin, his being carried into captivity, and continuing an exile till the time of his death, was early foretold in his father's reign, as may be particularly seen in the 22d chapter.*

*The last king of Judah was Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar made king, and exacted from him a solemn oath of allegiance and fidelity. He was not, perhaps, quite so bad a man as his brother Jehoiakim; but his reign was a wicked one, and completed the misfortunes of his country. His subjects seem to have but little respected him, while they considered him in no other light than as the lieutenant or viceroy of the king of Babylon, whose sovereignty they detested, and were continually urging him to throw off the yoke. Nor had he been long in possession of the kingdom, before he received ambassadors from the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyrus, and Sidon, soliciting him to join in a confederacy against the Babylonish power. But he was wise enough at this time to hearken to the prophet Jeremiah's advice, and to reject their propositions; and for some years continued to send regularly his presents and ambassadors to Babylon in token of his obedience. But the iniquities of his people were now ripe for punishment; and their idolatries, as the prophet Ezekiel describes them, (ch. viii.) were become so enormously profligate, that the stroke of vengeance could no longer be suspended. Zedekiah, therefore, was at last prevailed on by evil counsel, and the promise of assistance from Egypt, to break his oath, and renounce his allegiance; by which he drew upon himself the arms of the king of Babylon, who invaded Judah, took most of its cities, and invested Jerusalem. The Egyptians made a show of coming to his relief; and the Chaldean army, informed of their approach, broke off the siege, and advanced to meet them; having first sent off the captives which were in their camp. This produced a signal instance of the double-dealing of the Jews. For in the first moments of terror they had affected to return to God, and, in compliance with his law, had proclaimed the*

year of release to their Hebrew bond-servants, and let them go free. But on the retreat of the Chaldeans, when they believed the danger was over, and not likely to return, they repented of their good deed, and compelled those whom they had discharged to return to their former servitude. The Egyptians, however, durst not abide the encounter of the enemy, but faced about, and returned to their own land, leaving the people of Judah exposed to the implacable resentment of the king of Babylon. The siege was immediately renewed with vigour, and the city taken, according to the circumstantial account which is given of it in the 52d chapter.—The prophecies which were delivered in the reign of Zedekiah are contained in the 21st and 24th Chapters, the 27th to the 34th, and the 37th to the 39th inclusively, together with the last six verses of ch. xlix. and the 50th and 51st chapters concerning the fall of Babylon.

The subsequent transactions of the murder of Gedaliah, of the retreat of the Jews into Egypt, and of their ill behaviour there, are so particularly related ch. xl.—xliv. that it were needless here to repeat them. But it may be of use to observe, that, in the second year after the taking of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre; and in the course of that siege, which lasted thirteen years, he sent part of his forces against the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Philistines, and other neighbouring nations, to desolate and lay waste the country, as the prophets of God had foretold. At the same time Nebuzaradan, the Babylonish general, again entered the land of Judah, and carried off a few miserable gleanings of inhabitants that were found there. In the next year after the taking of Tyre, the king of Babylon invaded Egypt, which he plundered and ravaged from one end to the other; and on this occasion all the Jews, who had fled into that kingdom for refuge, were almost intirely cut off, or made prisoners. Such was the state of affairs in general, till, in the course of time, and precisely at the period which had been foretold, the Babylonian monarchy was itself overturned by the prevailing power of the Medes and Persians; and the Jewish nation once more returned to their own land.

It may be expected, that something should be said concerning the discriminating style and genius of this prophet's writing. But, instead of offering an opinion of my own, which in point of judgment may be questionable, the public in general will perhaps be better gratified, if I present them with the translation of a character already drawn by a very superior hand, to which I doubt not every reader of discernment will heartily subscribe. "Jeremiah," says this admirable critic, "is by no means wanting either in elegance or sublimity, although, generally speaking, inferior to Isaiah in both. Jerome has objected to him a certain rusticity in his diction, of which I must confess I do not discover the smallest trace. His thoughts indeed are somewhat less elevated, and he is commonly more large and diffuse in his sentences; but the reason of this may be, that he is mostly taken up with the gentler passions of grief and pity, for the expression of which he has a peculiar talent. This is most evident in the Lamentations, where those passions altogether predominate; but it is often visible also in his prophecies, in the former part of the book more especially, which is principally poetical; the middle are for the most part historical; but the last part, consisting of six chapters, is entirely poetical; and contains several oracles distinctly marked, in which this prophet falls very little short of the lofty style of Isaiah. But of the whole book of Jeremiah it is hardly the one half which I look upon as poetical." *Lowth on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, Prælect. xxi.*

## CHAP. I.

The time, and the calling of Jeremiah: his propheticall visions of an almond-rod and a scething-pot: his heavy message against Judah: God encourageth him with his promise of assistance.

[Before Christ 628.]

**T**HE words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Ana-

thoth in the land of Benjamin:

2 To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah,



Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

4 ¶ Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

5 Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am

with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

11 ¶ Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seeest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond-tree.

12 Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.

13 And the word of the LORD came unto

CHAP. I.

*Ver. 1. The words of Jeremiah*] This chapter forms an entire section by itself. It contains the call of Jeremiah, and the commission given him by God; the purport of which is explained by two symbolical images. God encourages him to proceed in the execution of it by assuring him of protection and support.

*Ver. 5. Before I formed thee, &c.*] See Isaiah, xlix. 1—5. We have examples of a similar designation with that mentioned in the text, in St. John the Baptist, and St. Paul.

*Ver. 10. See, I have—set thee over the nations*] In the style of Scripture the prophets are said to do what they declare shall be done, and therefore Jeremiah is here said to be set over nations, to root out, &c.; because he was authorized to make known the purposes of God, and because these events would follow in consequence of his prophecies. See Isai. vi. 9. and Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, vol. i.

*Ver. 11, 12. And I said, I see, &c.*] The almond-tree, שקד *shaked*, is so called, because this tree, before all others, first waketh, and riseth from its winter-repose. See Numb. xvii. 8. It flowers in the month of January, and by March brings its fruit to maturity; that is to say, in the warm southern countries. The forwardness of this fruit-bearing tree is here intimated to us: *I see a rod of an almond-tree:—Then said the Lord, Thou hast well seen; for I am hastening, or rather, I am awakening, or watching over, or, on account of my word to fulfil it.* So the LXX, ἐγὼ ἐπιγρηγορῶ ἐγὼ ἐπι, and the Vulgate, *vigilabo ego super.* In the first ages of the world, says the learned author of the Divine Legation, mutual converse was upheld by a mixed discourse of words and actions. Hence came the eastern phrase of the *vice of the sign*; and use and custom, improving what had arisen out of necessity into ornament, this practice subsisted long after the necessity was over, especially among the eastern people, whose natural temperament inclined them to a mode of conversation which so well exercised their vivacity by motion, and so well gratified it by a perpetual representation of material images. Of this we have innumerable instances in Holy Scripture, and especially in

1 Kings, xii. 11. and Ezek. iv. By these actions the prophets instructed the people in the will of God, and conversed with them in signs; but where God teaches the prophet, and, in compliance with the custom of that time, condescends to the same mode of instruction, then the significative action is generally changed into vision, either natural or extraordinary; as in these verses, where the prophet Jeremiah is bid to regard the *rod of the almond-tree* and the *scething-pot*. The almond-tree buds and blossoms very early in the spring; and therefore a branch of it, adorned with buds and blossoms, is a proper emblem to denote God's hastening the execution of the predictions which he delivered by his prophet; and accordingly Jeremiah lived to see most of the predictions fulfilled. We must not omit the explanation of this verse given us by Maimonides: "The prophets," saith he, "frequently employed equivocal and metaphorical words, with intent not to signify the thing which is obvious in the first sense of the words, but what is to be collected from another etymology and derivation thereof. Sometimes they see things which represent very different matters: from those that they see, and which are implied in another signification of the word, which stands for the things seen. An almond-tree is presented before Jeremiah, and yet no respect is had to that tree, which was only an artificial memorial that God will hasten; or watch over [שקד *shaked*,] the performance of his words, which is the other sense of the Hebrew word for an almond-tree: Amos (ch. viii. 1, 2.) sees a basket of summer-fruit; but that had no connexion, except in sound, with the predication which is implied in that sign; then said the Lord, the end is come upon my people Israel. Sometimes a double reference to different persons is included in the same word. Again, the letters of a word are transposed to form a word which hath no affinity in etymology or sense with the former. Thus Zechariah (ch. xi. 7, 8.) calls one of his shepherd's staves עֵשׂוֹם *noam, or delight*, to signify the pleasure that God had in his people, and the delight which the people took in God's worship. He calls his other staff חֶבְלִים *chobelim, bands*; in token that

me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething-pot; and the face thereof is toward the north.

14 Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.

15 For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.

16 And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

17 ¶ Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.

18 For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings

“the people were חבלים *chobelim*, because corrupters of God's law, and their souls did mutually בְּחֵלָה *bachelab*, “*abhor each other.*” See Bishop Chandler's Defence, vol. i. p. 225.

*Ver. 13. I said, I see a seething-pot.] A pot that sendeth forth steam.* The steam of a boiling-pot very properly represents the judgments of the Almighty, which are often compared to a fire, as the afflictions of the Israelites are to a smoking furnace. The latter part of the verse should be rendered, *And the face thereof is turned from the north:* that is to say, the steam of it was represented to the prophet as coming from the north; so that the pot or cauldron itself may denote Judæa, set on fire, and consumed by an army of Chaldeans, whose country lay to the north of Palestine. See Ezek. xi. 7. and Calmet.

*Ver. 15. And they shall set every one his throne, &c.]* The allusion here is to the ancient custom of setting and judging at the gates: “I will send against Jerusalem the princes, to judge, to condemn, to punish it: I will establish a tribunal at each of your gates, where kings shall sit to judge you, attended with soldiers, ready to execute their decrees.” The prophecy was fulfilled when this city was taken by Nebuchadnezzar. See ch. xxxix. 3.

*Ver. 17. Be not dismayed, &c.] Be not thou confounded at their presence, lest I confound thee in their presence.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here an account of the prophet's parentage, with the time of his prophesy.

1. He was of the sacerdotal race, the son of Hilkiyah, not the high priest, nor of that family, but probably a descendant from Ithamar, of whose line Abiathar was the last high-priest, whose possessions were at Anathoth, (see 1 Kings, ii. 26.) a city about three miles from Jerusalem, in the tribe of Benjamin.

2. He began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah, and, no doubt, was a great encourager of that pious king in his work of reformation, and countenanced by him in his labours to bring Israel to repentance: but the attempts of both were fruitless; the people continued hypocritical, even when they pretended to reform, and thus filled up the measure of their iniquities, and brought down those judgments which Jeremiah was commissioned to denounce against them. He continued to prophesy during the wicked reigns of Josiah's successors, when the destruction of the people was hastening apace, till he saw Jerusalem, under Zedekiah, miserably destroyed, and the people enslaved.

*Note;* They who will not be reformed, must be destroyed.

2dly, The designation of the prophet to his office, and God's encouragement of him to proceed in it, are here set forth.

1. His designation. God, before he came forth out of the womb, had sanctified or separated him for this peculiar service, in which he was to be employed, as a prophet unto the nations; not only to the Jews, but to other nations also, against whom his word should go forth. *Note;* None can minister acceptably before God, whom he hath not first sanctified and ordained.

2. His distress, under the apprehension of his own insufficiency. *Ab, Lord God! I cannot, or I know not how to speak,* as such an office requires; *for I am a child,* in weakness, probably also in years, it being certain that he began to prophesy very early. *Note;* (1.) The work of the ministry is an arduous task; they may well tremble for themselves who are called to undertake it. (2.) It becomes young men especially to entertain a diffidence of their own abilities. No rock so fatal to youth as self-conceit.

3. God encourages him for his work. *Say not, I am a child:* though never so insufficient of ourselves, we must not draw back when we have God's mission and promise of support: his strength shall be perfected in our weakness. Three arguments he urges: [1.] *I send thee;* and under a divine call we may be assured of divine help. [2.] *I will instruct thee; whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak;* and therefore he should never be at a loss for matter or words. [3.] *I am with thee,* to uphold thee with my arm, to comfort thee with my presence, to deliver thee from all danger; *be not afraid of their faces.* He might expect opposition; to be brow-beat, threatened, and insulted on account of his ministry; but he need not fear when God's omnipotence is engaged for him. *Note;* (1.) If God pleases, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings he can shew forth his praise. (2.) A faithful reprover must expect to meet a frowning world; but we must not fear the faces of men; nor need we; if God's power protect, and his love comfort us, what can man do against us?

4. God gives him a sign to confirm his word to him. *The Lord put forth his hand;* the Lord Jesus, the God of his holy prophets, who probably appeared now in a human form; *and touched my mouth,* intimating that it was sanctified, and fitted for his service; *and the Lord said unto me, Behold,*

of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

19 And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

*Behold, I have put my words into thy mouth, that he might with freedom and boldness deliver the message that he hath received from his master; and an awful one it was! See, I have set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, as a prophet, whose word concerning them would infallibly come to pass; to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down; to pronounce their doom, and foretell the judgments which should overturn them, as a house or a tree rooted up, and thrown down by the whirlwind: and to build and to plant; to prophecy the restoration of the Jews after their captivity; or to call them to repentance, that when others perished through obstinacy, they might be preserved.* Note; (1.) The sword of God's word in the mouth of his ministers is more to be feared than the glittering spear. (2.) The same prophetic word which is to some a favour of death unto death, because they harden their hearts against the warnings, becomes through Divine Grace, to the penitent a favour of life unto life.

3dly, Jeremiah, having received his mission, has here a general view of the great subject of his prophecy, the destruction of the Jews for their sins.

1. Their ruin is represented by two signs, shewing how speedily and terribly it approached. The first is a *rod of an almond-tree*, which is presented to his view, and which God explains, as signifying that the destruction of the Jews should be very soon, as the almond-tree hastens before any other tree to put forth her blossoms. The other is a *seething-pot*, with its face toward the north. This pot is Jerusalem, and the fire under it the Chaldeans, as God explains it, assembling out of the north, under the conduct of Nebuchadnezzar, called of God to execute his judgments, coming under the divine direction, and therefore sure to prevail. They shall set up not only their tents as besieging foes, but their thrones as triumphant conquerors, in the gates of Jerusalem, having subdued it, with all the defended cities of Judah. Note; (1.) God will never want armies to execute his vengeance against a devoted people: at his summons instantly they assemble. (2.) Ministers clearly in the Bible foresee the ruin of sinners, and forewarn them; but too often they will not believe, till too late they feel their doom inevitable.

2. The cause of their ruin is their sins, especially their idolatry. *I will utter my judgments against them, pass sentence upon them, and execute it, touching all their wickedness, which was great and aggravated, who have forsaken me, apostatized from God's worship and service, and have burnt incense to other gods; they have worshipped the works of their own hands; gods of their own fancy, and the images of their own making; which argued their stupidity and ignorance to be as strange as their impiety and ingratitude.*

3. God directs him how to proceed, and encourages

CHAP. II.

*God, having shewed his former kindness, expostulates with the Jews on their causeless revolt, beyond any example. They are the causes of their own calamities. The sins of Judah: her confidence is rejected.*

[Before Christ 628.]

**M**OREOVER, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

him to be faithful. *Gird up thy loins; alluding to the long garments that they wore in the East, which, when they went in haste, they girt about their waist. He must be expeditious and diligent: arise, and speak unto them boldly and resolutely, not intimidated by any fears or danger, all that I command thee, without adding thereto, or diminishing therefrom, however offensive and provoking the message might appear, and however great the personages to whom it must be delivered, to the kings, princes, priests, and people. The dignity of the magistrates does not set them above reproof, nor the sacredness of the sacerdotal office exempt those who dishonour it from rebuke: rather, as their influence and example are so pernicious, and they are chief in the transgression, they deserve the severest scourge. To engage him with boldness and zeal to discharge his mission, God warns and promises. He warns him of his danger, if he proved fearful or faithless: Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them, and put such marks of his displeasure upon him, as would be his greatest confusion. He promises, if he persisted undismayed in the discharge of his duty, to protect and preserve him safe as a defended city, strong as an iron pillar, and unshaken as walls of brass. Though all rose up against him, as he might expect they would, kings, priests, and people, yet they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee in every day of danger and difficulty.* Note; (1.) The ministers of God must shew no respect to persons when they are delivering his word, nor dare to adulterate the awful truths of God, by softening the expressions, or seeking to make their message less offensive. (2.) It requires much grace to stand against the torrent of ungodliness, and testify to great as well as small the judgments of God. (3.) We have need of every argument to work on our fears, as well as hopes; and all will be little enough to fix us unshaken against the revilings and opposition that we may expect to meet in the zealous discharge of our ministry. (4.) If God be with us, though princes threaten, and priests thunder their anathemas, and the people join the cry, we shall be enabled, unmoved and fearless, to witness to their faces their iniquities, and declare the wrath of God revealed against them.

CHAP. II.

*Ver. 1. Moreover, &c.]* The prophecy begun in this chapter is continued to the end of the 5th verse of the next chapter. In it God professes to retain the same kindness and favourable disposition towards Israel, which he had manifested in their earlier days. He expostulates with them on their ungrateful returns for his past goodness, and shews that it was not want of affection in him, but their own extreme and unparalleled wickedness and disloyalty, which

2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land *that was not sown*.

3 Israel *was* holiness unto the LORD, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

4 Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel:

5 Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity

have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

6 Neither said they, Where *is* the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?

7 And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

which had already subjected, and would still subject them to calamities and misery. He concludes with a pathetic address, exhorting them to return to him, with an implied promise of acceptance; and laments the necessity that he was under, through their continued obstinacy, of giving them farther marks of his displeasure.—This prophecy may not improbably have been delivered soon after the beginning of the prophet's mission.

Ver. 2. *I remember thee, &c.*] “I remember my first kindness to thee, when I delivered thee from the bondage of Egypt, and espoused thee to myself, to be my own peculiar people.” See Isaiah, liv. 5. Instead of a *land that was not sown*, Houbigant reads, *in an uncultivated land*. The discourse which begins here reaches to the 6th verse of the 3d chapter, wherein the prophet, after setting forth the infinite goodness of God toward his people, inveighs in the strongest manner against the crimes which then reigned in Judæa.

Ver. 3. *All that devour him shall offend*] *Are trespassers, or shall rue it.* Or, *All who desired to destroy him were destroyed; evils came upon them.* Houbigant.

Ver. 5. *What iniquity have your fathers found*] That is, “What injustice or unfaithfulness, in not performing my part of the Horeb covenant?” Walked after vanity, refers to their worship of idols. What an instance of goodness in God is it, that he would, as it were, render an account of his conduct to his people, and plead with them, as a man with his equal!

Ver. 6. *Through a land of deserts and of pits*] By the words *בארץ ערבה ושוחה* *beerets arabah vesbuchah*, it was undoubtedly meant to characterize the wilderness by some of its most unfavourable circumstances in point of nature and appearance. But to call it simply, “a land of deserts” seems not to help forward our idea of it. The proper sense of *ערבה* *arabah*, seems to be derived from the verb *ערב* *arab*, to mix or mingle together; and to be that of an extensive plain or open country, in which no one had an exclusive right of property, but the pasturage and sheepwalks were all promiscuous, and in common. Hence I apprehend the whole country of Arabia to have been denominated, being mostly occupied in that manner. Such also I suppose to be the plains mentioned in Scripture, and

called, from their adjacency, *the plains of Mamre, of Moab, of Jordan, of Jericho, &c.* as being unappropriated, and of course uncultivated lands in the neighbourhood of those places. Accordingly, to such land we usually give the name of *the waste*. Now the wilderness, through which the Israelites passed in their way out of Egypt, was to a vast extent a *land of waste* of this kind, totally unoccupied and unfit for the purpose of cultivation, and therefore absolutely incapable of subsisting, without a miracle, such a numerous people as for many years took up their abode in it. To this is added *שוחה* *vesbuchah*, which our Translators have rendered, “and of pits.” but why they supposed the wilderness to be called a *land of pits*, I do not well conceive. If, however, *שוחה* *sbuchah*, be the true reading, as all the collated MSS. agree in representing it, it undoubtedly signifies a *pit*, and may perhaps allude to the inclosure of the wilderness within craggy and high mountains, in respect of which Pharaoh is introduced as saying of the Israelites, “The wilderness hath shut them in,” or closed upon them. Exod. xiv. 3. So that, if we render the words in question “through a land of wide waste and a pit,” we may understand by it a country incapable of providing for the people's subsistence from being a *wide uncultivated waste*; but into which when they were once entered, they were fairly shut up as in a *pit*, where they and their families must have inevitably perished, if they had not had the assistance of Providence to support them by the way, and finally to extricate them out of it.

*And of the shadow of death*] This image was undoubtedly borrowed from those dusky caverns and holes among the rocks, which the Jews ordinarily chose for their burying-places: where death seemed to hover continually, casting over them his broad shadow. Sometimes, indeed, I believe nothing more is intended by it, than to denote a dreariness and gloom like that which reigns in those dismal mansions. But in other places it respects the perils and dangers of the situation. Thus, Pf. xxiii. 4. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” And again, Pf. xlii. 19. But over and above the foregoing allusions, *the land of the shadow of death* here seems to mean *the grave* itself, which the wilderness actually proved to all the individuals of

the

8 The priests said not, Where *is* the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not; the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after *things that* do not profit.

9 Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead.

10 For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

11 Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for *that which* doth not profit.

12 Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.

13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

14 ¶ *Is* Israel a servant? *is* he a home-born slave? why is he spoiled.

15 The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.

16 Also the children of Noph and Taha-panes have broken the crown of thy head.

17 Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?

18 ¶ And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of

the children of Israel that entered into it, Caleb and Joshua only excepted, whose lives were preserved by a special providence.

Ver. 8. *The priests said not, Where is the Lord?*] The priests, or scribes, whose office it was to instruct others in their duty, were ignorant or regardless of it themselves; and this was the principal cause of that degeneracy of manners which prevailed among the people. By the *pastors* are meant the kings, princes, and chiefs of the nations; for the word *רֹעֵב* *roeb*, *pastor* is used in the Prophets for a magistrate, as well as for an ecclesiastical governor; and hence it appears, that all orders and degrees of men in authority had contributed to that corruption of manners whereof Jeremiah complains. See Grotius and Calmet.

Ver. 9. *I will yet plead with you*] That is, I will maintain by arguments the equity of my proceedings, and the injustice of yours.

Ver. 10. *The isles of Chittim*] By *צִיִּים* *iiim*, it is certain that the Hebrews did not mean the same as we do by *islands*, that is, lands encompassed with water all around; and therefore we ought not so to render this Hebrew word. It sometimes signifies only a country or region, as Isai. xx. 6. but usually perhaps distant ones, and such as had a line of sea-coast. Bochart, Phaleg. lib. iii. cap. 5, has made it appear with much probability, that the countries peopled by Chittim, the grandson of Japhet, are Italy and the adjacent provinces of Europe, which lie along the Mediterranean sea. And as these were to the west of Judæa, and Kedar in Arabia to the east, the plain purport of this passage is, "Look about you to the west and to the east."

Ver. 11. *Hath a nation changed their gods?*] That is, according to Bishop Warburton's interpretation, "Have any of the nations brought the God of Israel into the number of their false gods, as the Israelites have brought in them to stand in fellowship with the true?" For that the ancients frequently changed their tutelary gods, or one idol for another, is too notorious to need any proof.

Vol. IV.

This contrariety, therefore, to their received custom is remarkable. The reason of it may be this: it was a thing well known to the neighbouring nation, that the God of Israel had an abhorrence to all community or alliance with the gods of the nations. This unfociable temper would deter those people, who all held him as a tutelary deity of great power, from ever bringing him into the fellowship of their country gods; for, after such declaration, they could not suppose that his company would prove very auspicious; and in truth they had a signal of his ill neighbourhood much to their cost, 1 Sam. v. 4, 5, &c. See Div. Leg. vol. 4.

Ver. 12. *Be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate*] *Be amazed; marvel, or tremble exceedingly.*

Ver. 13. *And hewed them out cisterns*] By these cisterns are meant the foreign succours which they sought for from the Assyrians and Egyptians; succours, which became not only useless, but destructive to them. Others understand it of the false deities, upon which they built their confidence. "God," says Lowth, "is the author of all blessings, both spiritual and temporal; and if men place their happiness either in false religions, or in the uncertain comforts of worldly blessings, they will find themselves as wretchedly disappointed as those who expect to find water in broken cisterns."

Ver. 14. *Is Israel a servant?*] "Is he of a condition to be delivered as a prey to his enemies? Is he of those people whom God regards as slaves and strangers? Is he not the son, the chosen and peculiar people of God? Why then hath the Lord treated him as a common slave?" &c. See John, viii. 33. and Calmet.

Ver. 15, 16. *The young lions roared, &c.*] *Against him lions shall roar: they have lifted up the voice, and have made his land a desolation; his cities are burned, so as to be without an inhabitant. Also the children of Memphis and Daphne shall bruise the crown of thy head.* It appears, by this verse, who are meant by the *young lions* in ver. 15. *Noph* and *Taha-panes*, or *Memphis* and *Daphne*, were two cities in Egypt.

Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that *it is an evil thing* and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear *is* not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of Hosts.

20 For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

21 Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

22 For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much sope, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.

23 How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in

the valley, know what thou hast done: *thou art* a swift dromedary traversing her ways;

24 A wild ass used to the wilderness, *that* snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her.

25 Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

26 As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets,

27 Saying to a stock, Thou *art* my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned *their* back unto me, and not *their* face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

28 But where *are* thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save

Egypt. Jeremiah speaks here of the future as of the past. In the time of Josiah the country was not in the condition here described: the land was not reduced to desolation, nor the cities burned with fire: but the determination of the Lord was past. See ch. i. 10.

Ver. 18. *And now what hast thou to do, &c.*] The kings of Egypt and Assyria were the most potent monarchs in the neighbourhood of Judæa; and according as either of these was the stronger, the Jews made their court to him, and desired his assistance. This is expressed by *drinking the waters of Sihor*, an Egyptian river, which some suppose to be the Nile; (see Joshua, xiii. 3.) and of *Euphrates*, called here *the river*, by way of eminence. The expressions allude to ver. 13. where human assistances are styled *broken cisterns*, and opposed to God, who by reason of his omnipotence is called *the fountain of living waters*. To drink of the waters of these rivers, might possibly allude farther, both to the strong propensity which the Israelites had to return to Egypt, and to that which they shewed for adopting the idolatrous worship of these countries. For the Egyptians worshipped the *water*, and particularly that of the Nile. See Div. Leg. vol. iii. and Calmet.

Ver. 19. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee*] *Shall accuse or condemn thee*. This whole discourse of Jeremiah is a kind of pleading, (see ver. 9.) wherein the prophet maintains the cause of God against his people.

Ver. 20. *For of old time, &c.*] *I indeed long since have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bonds; but thou saidst, I will not serve: upon every high hill, and under every green tree, I will lay myself down, and play the harlot*. Houbigant. From this translation, which seems very just and unexceptionable, the meaning of the passage is extremely clear; that the Jews

had been guilty of the utmost ingratitude in breaking the divine law and covenant, against idolatry in particular, even after they had been freed by God from their Egyptian bondage, and admitted into an immediate covenant and alliance with him. There is a variety of metaphors and references in this and the subsequent prophets, similar to those which have occurred in the book of Isaiah, and which, being explained there, will be no farther taken notice of in the subsequent observations.

Ver. 21. *How then art thou turned, &c.*] This passage has occasioned great perplexity; but it does not seem to have occurred to any interpreter, that סורר *surei*, is the imperative feminine of סור *sur*, and signifies, "Depart, Get thee gone, O vine of spurious growth," being addressed by God to the house of Israel under the character of a vine, which is discarded for having adulterated the good qualities of its original stock. נכריה *nakriah*, properly signifies *strange*, of a different nature from the stock whence it was taken. Compare the beautiful allegory in Isaiah, ch. v. 1—7.

Ver. 22. *Though thou wash thee with nitre*] See Prov. xxv. 20. and Scheuchzer's observations on the place. See Virg. Georg. iii.

Ver. 25. *Withhold thy foot, &c.*] The first clause might be rendered, *Do not uncover thy feet*; and the next, *Restrain thy throat from thirst*. They allude to the manners of those times, and imply, in a primary sense, a total abstinence from every thing unchaste; and, in their secondary sense, an utter abhorrence of idolatry. The next clause may be read, *But thou answeredst to these things, It is done; I will not hear; for I will love strangers*.

Ver. 28. *For according to the number of thy cities, &c.*] The



thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

29 Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD.

30 In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

31 O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?

32 Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a

bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

33 Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways.

34 Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.

35 ¶ Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.

36 Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria.

37 Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and

The Israelites had now contracted all the fashionable habits of Egypt. We are assured, that it had been long peculiar to the Egyptian superstition, for every city of that empire to have its own tutelary god, besides those which were worshipped in common. And now Jeremiah tells us in this verse, that the people of Judah bore a part with them in this extravagance. See Div. Leg. vol. iii. Ezek. xvi. 24, 25. and Hosea, x. 1.

Ver. 30. *Your own sword hath devoured your prophets*] That is to say, "You yourselves have put your prophets to death for reproving you." Thus Aza and Joash were put to death in the reign of Manasseh; see 1 Kings, xix. 1, 10. Neh. ix. 26. and Matt. xxiii. 34, 35. Houbigant renders the last clause, *As a destroying lion lays waste your habitation*. And he begins the next verse, *See ye the word of the Lord; &c.* which may be rendered, *O ye of this generation, behold ye the cause of JEHOVAH*. The subsequent words allude to the murmurings of the children of Israel in the wilderness. Instead of, *We are lords*, Houbigant reads, *We will depart*. The meaning of the Hebrew seems to be, "We disclaim the divine authority; we will assert our own independency."

Ver. 33. *Why trimmest thou thy way*] Houbigant renders this verse, *Why dost thou strew thy way, that thou mayest find lovers? And teachest thy ways to thy companions?* The meaning of the original word טִיבֵי *teitibi*, rendered *trimmest*, is to make right, or agreeable. The French render this verse, *Why wouldst thou justify thy conduct, to enter into favour with me? So long as thou hast taught to others the evil which thou hast done; and while (ver. 34.) in thy skirts, &c.* Instead of, *By secret search, &c.* they read, and are followed by Houbigant, *I have not found it in the ditches, but in the same places where you have shed it*. See Calmet. The words may be rendered, *Souls of the poor and innocent. Thou didst not find them in any act of violence: ver. 35. Yet over all these things thou sayest, inasmuch as I am innocent, surely his anger is turned away from me; Behold, I will plead with thee upon thy saying, I have not sinned*. See Exod. xxii. 2.

Ver. 36. *Why gaddest thou about so much, &c.*] This is rendered by the Vulgate, *How vile art thou become, changing*

or repeating thy ways! "Continuing still to seek new succours from strangers, though thou hast been so often deceived! Egypt now shall fail thee, as Assyria has done before."

Ver. 37. *Thine hands upon thine head*] As Tamar went forth from her brother Amnon, her garments torn, and her hands upon her head; insulted and despised, and in the deepest grief and misery.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Being ordained a prophet to the Lord, Jeremiah has his message delivered to him, and is commanded to go to Jerusalem from Anathoth, the place of his residence, and there publicly declare the word of God, that all may hear, and either repent of their iniquities, or be left inexcusable in their unbelief and hardness of heart.

1. He reminds them of their own former professions, and God's dealings with them; when by every instance of kindness he had engaged their affections, and they had given such fair expectations of their making a suitable return. *I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth*; either God's kindness to them in their early days, or rather their affectionate regard to him; *the love of thine espousals*, when their warm hearts, filled with affection, as a new-married bride, sought only how to please their Lord; *when thou wentest after me in the wilderness*, trusting on his guidance, and depending on his providence; *in a land that was not sown*, and where none of the necessaries of life were to be obtained, but they were fed by daily miracles. *Israel was holiness unto the Lord*, separated for him, consecrated to him, and in the bonds of his covenant solemnly engaged to be his and his alone; *and the first-fruits of his increase*, presenting themselves, bodies, souls, and spirits, as the first-fruits, a holy offering unto him. Thus they did run well, and God's blessing was in the midst of them: *all that devour him shall offend or be guilty*; God protected them, they were as the apple of his eye dear to him, none dared touch them with impunity; *evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord*; God will be the avenger of their wrongs, and their enemies shall perish. From Egypt's iron bondage

thine hands upon thine head : for the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

he brought them, led them *through the wilderness* by his pillar of a cloud and fire; *through a land of deserts, and of pits*, where venomous creatures lodged, scorpions, and fiery flying serpents; *through a land of drought*, where no water could be found, *and of the shadow of death*, dismal and lonely; *through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt*, pathless, without inhabitant; and yet amid difficulties so insurmountable by human power, God safely conducted them, covered them with the shadow of his cloud from the scorching sun, fed them with plenty of the richest food, opened streams from the rock, protected them from every danger, and brought them safe at last to his promised rest, to a *plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof*, to a land flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands; for which unspeakable favours he justly might expect from them the deepest returns of duty, love, and service. *Note*; (1.) Our first love should be often remembered, to keep us from departing from our God. Rev. ii. 4. (2.) God takes pleasure in beholding the affections of his people placed upon him. (3.) When we love God in sincerity, we shall follow him implicitly, and fear no dangers even in the wilderness. (4.) God's Israel are a holy people; they who answer not this character have no lot nor portion among them. (5.) They who persecute God's people, will find him the avenger of their quarrel. (6.) The way to heaven lies through difficulties impassable for mortal strength; and if ever our souls are safely led to the heavenly Canaan, we must acknowledge ourselves intirely indebted to his everlasting arms of power and love, which are always engaged for the persevering believer. (7.) The greater our trials, the more is the grace of God magnified in our deliverance. (8.) For all the wonders of his grace, God hath the deepest and most just demands of love and service from us. (9.) The promising beginnings that we have shewn, and the fair professions which we have made, will greatly aggravate our guilt, should we begin in the spirit and end in the flesh.

2. He upbraids them with their black ingratitude. *Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me? Had he done them injustice, been a hard master, or unfaithful to any of his promises? No; there is no unrighteousness in him: they who forsake him, forsake their own mercies, and out of their own mouths will be condemned—that they are gone far from me, apostates from his service and worship; for those who depart from a religious profession, become usually viler than those who never pretended to it; and have walked after vanity, after idols, which are the greatest vanities, and are become vain; as corrupt in their practice as dark in their imaginations; defiling, with their abominations, the good land into which the Lord had brought them, and which they held only on condition of their fidelity. God was utterly forgotten, none said, Where is the Lord? notwithstanding all his miracles of mercy shewn them: nay, the priests, who should have been the first to restrain others, were chief in the transgression; the priests said not, Where is the Lord? and if they, who were their guides, took no pains to acquaint them-*

elves with him, no marvel that the people forgot God: *and they that handle the law knew me not; pretending to instruct others, but totally ignorant themselves, and strangers to all experimental knowledge of God and his truth. The pastors also transgressed against me, civil, as well as ecclesiastical, casting off all fear of God; and the prophets prophesied by Baal, pretending inspiration from their idol to contradict the prophets of the Lord, and supported by the princes and priests in their impiety; and walked after things that do not profit, their false gods, from whom no blessing could be derived. Note*; When blind priests lead a blind people, no wonder if they perish together.

2dly, Having rebuked their ingratitude, God pleads against them the unprecedented folly of their conduct. He desires to convince sinners, and therefore he uses every argument, and at least will leave them inexcusable in their impenitence.

1. They were in this respect more false and fickle even than the idolatrous nations which they affected to resemble. Those retained a veneration for their fathers' gods: base as the idols were which they worshipped, nothing could prevail with them to forsake the religion of their ancestors. Go to the isles of Chittim, Greece or Italy, or to Kedar in Arabia, and not an instance would be found of a nation that had changed their gods; *but my people have changed their glory, have forsaken the living, true, and only God, whose service they should have accounted their highest honour, and their distinguishing separation for him their most exalted glory; for that which doth not profit; for idols, for Baal, in whose worship neither honour nor advantage could be found, but the very contrary.*

2. The heavens are called upon with wonder and horror to behold this scene of aggravated guilt and folly. *Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, the inhabitants of them, or the very inanimate creation might well be amazed; and be ye horribly afraid, trembling for sins so great, and which must bring down judgments so heavy: be ye very desolate, saith the Lord, as if the sun should refuse his light to such miscreants, the clouds thicken with thunder and lightning over them, and sweep them from the earth with the besom of destruction. For my people, separated for God, once professors of his truth, and thereby every departure from him being rendered more infamous and exceeding sinful; my people have committed two evils, their transgressions are numberless, but these the capital sins, and the sources of all the rest: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, rejecting his government, neglecting his ordinances, and leaving him far above out of their sight; and in so doing, have cut themselves off from the fountain of living waters, from that God of all grace and consolation, in whom they might have for ever found a rich supply for all their wants; and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water; such were their idols, which, after all the pains and expence bestowed on them, did not afford the least consolation, not even the miserable relief of a drop of putrid stagnating water, to quench the thirst of their*



## C H A P. III.

*God's great mercy in Judah's vile whoredom. Judah is worse than Israel. The promises of the Gospel to the penitent. Israel reproved, and called by God, maketh a solemn confession of sin.*

[Before Christ 628.]

**T**HEY say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become ano-

ther votaries. *Note;* (1.) They who forsake God forsake their own mercies. (2.) As long as our souls come to Jesus the living fountain, so long shall we find the waters of his grace within us a well of water, springing up to everlasting life. (3.) Whatever creature enjoyments may promise, they will deceive our expectations: if we seek our happiness from wealth, honour, or indulgence, toil as we can to secure the bliss, we shall find the cisterns empty; but one portion can adequately satisfy an immortal soul; and that is, the love of the eternal God.

3dly, The miseries coming upon them for their sins are spoken of as already present, because they were so near and certain.

1. By their iniquities they had brought themselves into slavery, were defeated by their enemies, and their country ravaged. *Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave?* whence comes this grievous change, how is their glorious liberty lost? *Why is he spoiled?* surely some awful provocation hath brought on him this calamity, for terrible are his desolations. *The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste;* his invading foe, the king of Assyria, with his army, fierce and cruel as these ravaging beasts, roaring and yelling with all the horrid din of war, has plundered the country, and his cities are burnt without inhabitant; all led captives, or slain by the sword, and none left to restore them from their ruins. *Also the children of Neph and Tabanians have broken the crown of thy head;* the Egyptians, whose chief cities these were, as well as the Assyrians, contributed to their ruin, Josiah being slain by Pharaoh Necho, his son dethroned, Jerusalem plundered, and a tribute set upon them, 2 Kings, xxiii. 29—35. *Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, yea, verily; none but themselves had they to blame for their sufferings, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God;* him, who was so able to protect them, who stood in a relation to them so glorious, and from whom it was so foolish as well as wicked to depart: him they forsook for idols, and human confidences, changing a rock for a reed; *when he led thee by the way, the right way, the path of duty; in which had they abode, they would have certainly found it the way of safety, but they refused his guidance, and rushed on their own ruin.* *Note;* Whatever miseries a sinner is involved in, whether in time or eternity, this bitter reflection will sharpen their edge, *Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?*

2. The sinful methods which they took to extricate themselves from their troubles, served but to hasten their destruction. Instead of seeking unto God for help against their enemies, they sought other supports. When threatened by Assyria, they ran to Egypt for succour; when in-

ther man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers: yet return again to me, saith the LORD.

2 Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast pol-

vaded by Egypt, they courted the Assyrians' help. *What hast thou to do with these, who in their turn will deceive, oppress, and plunder thee? Thine own wickedness* in general, or this in particular, of trusting on these vain helpers, *shall correct thee,* bring severe chastisement upon them, and *thy backsliding,* their treacherous departure from God, *shall reprove thee.* *Know, therefore, and see it, that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts.* The event would prove, to their terrible conviction, the evil and misery of the ways which they had chosen, and sinners will find this truth universally verified. Observe, (1.) The root of all sin: *My fear is not in thee;* there is deep unbelief in the natural heart, God's warnings make no impression, and the practice can rise no higher than the principle. Hence (2.) The effect produced. *Thou hast forsaken the Lord;* when the heart is not restrained by his fear, corrupt nature, prone to sin, easily hurries on the soul to all the forbidden indulgences of flesh and spirit. (3.) The issue of sin is evil and bitter. It is not only evil in its own nature, as opposite to God's purity and perfections, but the consequences are ever evil and bitter to the soul; the curse follows the sinner closer than his shadow; his miseries and disappointments are many, his enjoyments embittered; and death, eternal death, stares him in the face, the terrible wages of sin. (4.) It is happy for those who are brought to see and know this before it is too late; and all God's visitations have this design, to lead us to repentance for our sins, that we may not perish in them.

4thly, The prophet prosecutes his charge against this rebellious people.

1. Their crying sin was idolatry; and when they had left the one true God, their wanderings were endless, and their idols innumerable; every city had its god and tutelar deity. On every hill their idols stood thick; and not a spreading tree or grove was there, where their incense had not smoked, and where they had not played the harlot, committing spiritual adultery. Nor was this the crime of the refuse of the people only; their kings, princes, priests, and prophets, horrible to tell! these were the patrons of idolatry, and the most bigotted votaries, *saying to a flock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth;* and whilst infatuated, and more senseless than the images which they worshipped, to these they ascribed divine honours, they turned their backs on God, with insolent contempt of his worship and service. *Note;* When a sinner is given up to his own heart, there are no lengths of folly, iniquity, and impiety, to which he may not run.

2. Their attempts to deny it were vain, and the methods

luted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness.

3 Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain;

thods they used to expiate their sins useless. Like the adulterers, Prov. xxx. 20. they disowned the charge of idolatry, when the evidence was so notorious. In the valley, probably of Hinnom, where they burnt their children to Moloch, the monuments of their sin testified against them, and their excuses were frivolous when God had, in his omniscience, marked their iniquities with a brand that they never could wash out, or rather, as ver. 22. may signify, their ceremonial ablutions and sacrifices to which they had recourse, could never cancel the guilt of their sins, nor remove the stain of them from their consciences. *Note;* (1.) To deny, or seek to palliate the evil of our sins, is the sure sign of an impenitent heart. (2.) Nothing can wash out the stain of sin's black guilt, but the blood of Jesus; every other method will but fix the dye deeper and stronger.

3. Their sins were abundantly aggravated by the mercies that they had received, and the fair promises which they had made. Of old, God had delivered them from the Egyptian yoke, planted them in the promised land as *a noble vine, wholly a right seed*, both with respect to their worthy ancestors, and their own gracious conduct on their first possessing their inheritance, Josh. xxiv. 31. nor could there be more solemn engagements, than they had repeatedly made of their perpetual fidelity, Exod. xix. 8. xxiv. 7. yet like a broken bow they had started aside, degenerated from their primitive piety, and become as wild gourds, not only useless but noxious. *Note;* (1.) The greatness of God's mercies aggravates our guilt and ingratitude. (2.) We need often reflect with shame on the promises that we have made not to transgress, and on our repeated unfaithfulness.

4. They are represented as pursuing their idolatries with determined waywardness, in spite of all warnings; as the dromedary and wild ass, when urged on by their natural desires, so were this people raging in their idolatrous lusts, and no hope remained of reclaiming them, till the judgments of God were heavy upon them, and stopped their career. *Note;* (1.) Nothing so lawless as brutal lust; vain are all the restraints of reason, conscience, honour, when appetite seizes the reins. (2.) However headstrong in the vigour of health men are in the pursuit of their forbidden gratifications, the hours will come of deep remorse, when their career will be stopped: and when *the joys of sin* no more inebriate, *the sting of sin*, like a scorpion, will torment the guilty conscience.

5. Fair warning is given them of the issue of their ways, and they are admonished to prevent their captivity by repentance. *Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst*; for unless they repented of their evil ways, and turned from them, this would be the consequence, that barefoot, and ready to be choked with thirst in the journey, they should be led captives into a distant land. Some understand it as an admonition, not to wear out the shoes of their messengers, and be at the pains of sending to Egypt or Assyria for help, since these succours would be of no use to them: but the former sense seems best.

6. Their obstinacy, or their despair, is rebuked. *But thou saidst, There is no hope*; bidding the prophets cease their attempts, for they would never attend to them, either to quit their idolatries, or to desist from seeking the help of their heathen neighbours; they liked, and would pursue their own inventions. Or this is the language of despair, as if their case was past hope for God to pardon, or their corruptions so strong, that to attempt to resist them was vain, therefore they desperately abandoned themselves to their iniquities. *Note;* Nothing so effectually enslaves the soul to sin, as despair; and therefore while Satan is ever a preacher of presumption to the careless, he fails not to be a preacher of despair to the awakened, as if their iniquities were too great to be forgiven, or their corruptions too strong to be subdued; and therefore that it were best to banish their convictions, and abandon themselves to their lusts: but he was a liar from the beginning. No sin can be too great for infinite love to pardon in the penitent, no corruption so strong that Almighty grace cannot subdue. Let us take to us words, and return unto the Lord, and then there is surely yet hope in our end.

7. If they persisted in their ways, confusion would cover them in the day of their calamity, as a thief detected in the fact, when their false gods cannot relieve them; and the true God, whom they have forsaken, will refuse to hear their prayer. *Note;* (1.) In the day of calamity, many, who never thought of him before, are driven to God to cry, Save us; but when the fear of hell merely, not the sense of the evil of sin, dictates the prayer, no marvel that it is rejected. (2.) Whatever the impenitent sinner places his comfort or confidence in, the day will come when it will prove a refuge of lies.

8thly, It is the folly and wickedness of sinners, that they complain against God, as if his punishments were severe, and his ways unequal; when they alone are the authors of their own misery, and their punishment less than their iniquities deserve.

1. God vindicates his justice. *Wherefore will ye plead with me?* when their case was so indefensible; *ye all have transgressed against me*, and therefore could neither exculpate themselves from guilt, nor justly complain of their sufferings. *Note;* We are all sinners at God's bar; every mouth must be stopped; we have nothing to do but to confess our guilt, justify his judgments, and cast ourselves wholly on his mercy.

2. He charges upon them their incorrigibleness. In vain had been all the afflictions that he had brought upon them; hardened under the rod, *they received no correction*, were not brought to any repentance. Nay, as if exasperated by what they suffered, when he seconded the rebukes of his providences by the word of his prophets, like furious lions they rushed on these ministers of God, and cruelly shed their blood for their fidelity. *Note;* (1.) They who will be zealous in rebuking men's sins, must put their life in their hands. (2.) It is the sign of a desperate state when afflictions harden, instead of softening the heart.

3. He expostulates with them on their ingratitude. Had he shewn them unkindness, or brought them into

and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.

4 Wilt thou not from this time cry unto

me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?

5 Will he reserve his anger for ever? will

darkness and distress, they might have had some plea for their revolt; but his conduct to them in the wilderness, the rich provision that he made for them, the light which he led them, and the land in which he placed them, all evinced his unutterable kindness; and the least attention to his dealings with them might convince them of it: how ungrateful then was their rebellion, thus to cast off his government, and reject his worship and service! *Note;* (1.) They who cleave to God, find all his ways pleasantness and peace: if sinners are entangled in a wilderness, or enveloped with darkness, it is because of their departure from him. (2.) They who affect to emancipate themselves from God's government, only exchange his service, which is perfect freedom, for the base and tyrannical servitude of their lusts.

4. He accuses them of sundry crimes against him. [1.] Forgetfulness of him. It would be counted strange if a maid forgot her ornaments, and a bride her attire; but, stranger far! *my people have forgotten me days without number.* They were his professing people, and therefore the more criminal their neglect of him, and especially when so long persisted in. [2.] They were corrupters of others. Like a lewd harlot who dresses and paints, to inveigle men into her snares, so had they sought to engage their heathen neighbours to become their confederates, and join in their idolatries: *therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways,* instructing them in their superstitions; and, vile as they were before, making them worse by the connexion. *Note;* (1.) They who entice others into sin, will have most aggravated guilt on their heads. (2.) Fellowship with the workers of iniquity is dangerously infectious, and diligently to be avoided. [3.] They were polluted with innocent blood, of the children whom they sacrificed to Moloch; or of innocent persons, especially the prophets and faithful men, who were murdered for reproving their impieties, 2 Kings, xxi. 16. and this openly and notoriously; it needed no search, nor deep inquiry; their skirts were dyed with blood, and the corpses cried for vengeance against them. And therefore, [4.] Their plea of innocence was presumptuous, and their expectation of God's wrath being removed, vain. *Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned,* which was an aggravation of their sin, and provoked God the more to arise in judgment against them. *Note;* (1.) If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar. (2.) Until a sinner be brought to acknowledge the justice of God's wrath, it will never depart from him.

5. Their confidences should at last fail them, and they be led into a miserable captivity. Like an adulteress who gads about to gratify her most sinful desires, so had they gone to Assyria and Egypt, making leagues with them in turn for their assistance, as they were pressed by either; but they would disappoint them. Assyria had distressed them formerly as allies, 2 Chron. xxviii. 20. and the Egyptians would alike be their confusion, as they afterwards proved, when, against Nebuchadnezzar, they pro-

mised help in vain; so that *thou shalt go forth with thine hands upon thine head,* as a mourner, led into a shameful captivity; *for the Lord hath rejected thy confidences,* their allies, in whom they trusted, and *thou shalt not prosper in them,* but he gives them up for a prey to their enemies. *Note;* (1.) The soul that leaves God wanders endlessly, seeking rest, and finding none. (2.) Human confidences and comforts in the day of evil will prove a broken reed, unable to support the soul.

C H A P. III.

*Ver. 2. High-places, &c.]* See Prov. vii. 8, 9, 10. and the *Observations*, p. 52. The fondness of the people for idolatry is compared to the wantonness of a harlot, who lies in wait for men as for her prey; or as the Arabian hides himself in the desert, to strip the unwary traveller, Mr. Harmer has cited from a manuscript of Sir John Chardin the following lively description of the attention and eagerness of the Arabs in watching for passengers, whom they may spoil. "Thus the Arabs wait for caravans with the most violent avidity, looking about them on all sides, raising themselves up on their horses, running here and there to see if they cannot perceive any smoke, or dust, or tracks on the ground, or any other marks of people passing along." Harmer's *Observations*, vol. I. ch. ii. obf. 7.

*Ver. 3. Therefore the showers have been withholden]* The general import of this passage is, that though God had begun in some degree to chastise his people (as he threatened, Lev. xxvi. 19. Deut. xxviii. 23.) with a view to their reformation, his chastisement had not produced the desired effect; for they continued as abandoned as before, without shewing the least sign of shame or remorse. *By the showers* we are to understand what is otherwise called *the former* or *first rain*, being the first that falls in autumn after a long summer's drought, which is usually terminated in Judæa and the neighbouring countries by heavy showers which last for some days. In Judæa, according to Dr. Shaw, who, as Mr. Harmer well observes, must have learnt it by inquiries from the inhabitants of the country, the beginning of November is the time of the first descent of rain; though in other parts of Syria it happens sooner. The *latter rain* is that which generally comes about the middle of April; after which it seldom or never rains during the whole summer. And therefore when at the prayer of Samuel the Lord sent thunder and rain in the time of wheat harvest, as we read 1 Sam. xii. 17, 18. such an unusual phenomenon, happening immediately according to the prophet's prediction, was justly considered as an authentic sign of his having spoken by the divine authority. But we are not to conclude, as some have done, that between the former and latter rains there was no more rain during the whole winter. The fact is otherwise; for besides what are sometimes called *the second rains*, which commonly succeed *the first* after an interval of fine weather for a number of days, the winter months are more or less indiffer-

he keep *it* to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.

6 ¶ The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen *that* which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.

7 And I said after she had done all these *things*, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw *it*.

8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

9 And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.

10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD.

11 And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

12 ¶ Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I *am* merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep *anger* for ever.

13 Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD.

14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

indiscriminately wet, as may be collected from sundry passages in Scripture, as well as from the accounts of travellers who have been in those parts. However, the *former* and *latter*, or, as we may call them, the autumnal and vernal rains are particularly distinguished, because on the regular returns of these the plentiful harvests essentially depend; the former being absolutely requisite for seed-time, and the latter for filling the ears of corn before the harvest comes on. I say, the former for seed-time; for Mr. Harmer very justly reproves those who suppose the former rain not to come till after sowing, to make the seed take root; for the Arabs of Barbary, he says, break up their grounds after the first rains in order to sow wheat; and the sowing of barley, &c. is still later; and at Aleppo too the ploughing does not commence till after the rainy season is come. And we may fairly presume the case to be the same in Judæa; since after the long dry weather the parched ground would naturally require some previous moistening, before it could be put in fit order for receiving the seed. But not only the crops of grain must suffer by the suspension or failure of either the first or latter rains, or of both; but by the uncommon lengthening of the summer drought the pasturage would fail for the cattle, and the fountains and reservoirs, or cisterns of waters, whence the people of that country had their chief or only supply, would be exhausted and dried up; so that there would be at least as much danger of perishing by thirst as by famine. See Harmer's Observations, vol. I. ch. i. concerning the weather in the holy land.

Ver. 5. *Behold, &c.*] *Behold, thou hadst but spoken, and didst wickedly, and with all thy might.* Houbigant renders this whole verse, *Shall these things therefore be dissembled, and covered in perpetual silence, after thou hast so often offended, and confirmed thyself in thy wickedness?*

Ver. 6. *The Lord said also unto me*] A new discourse begins at this verse. Jeremiah having convinced the Jews of their infidelity, idolatry, and all sorts of corruption, in the way of pleading, from the second chapter to the present verse; here the Lord, as judge, pronounces the sentence, and exhorts the Jews again to return to him. All this passed in the 18th year of Josiah, when the Jews were again plunged into the greatest irregularities. *Backsliding Israel*, means the ten tribes. See Calmet.

Ver. 8. *And I saw, &c.*] *And I saw when on account of the adultery which backsliding Israel had committed, &c.* Houbigant renders the words, *I saw*, in the third person; *Nay, though she saw, that I had put away backsliding Israel, for all the adulteries, &c.*

Ver. 11. *The backsliding Israel hath justified herself*] *Backsliding Israel hath appeared just in comparison of perfidious Judah.* The crimes of the latter greatly surpassed those of the former. See Ezek. xvi. 51.

Ver. 12. *Go, and proclaim, &c.*] The sin of the ten tribes being attended with more favourable circumstances than that of Judah, the prophet is here commanded to call them to repentance, with promises of pardon; and accordingly is ordered to direct his speech northward; that is to say toward Assyria and the country beyond the Euphrates, whither the ten tribes were carried away captive. Instead of, *I will not cause, &c.* Houbigant reads, *I will not turn my face from you.*

Ver. 14. *Turn,—for I am married, &c.*] *Turn—and though I have rejected you, I will take you one of a city, and two of a tribe, or country:* that is to say, “I will receive you, though there should be but one from a city willing to return, and two for a province, or tribe.” These prophecies were accomplished in the letter, after the edict of Cyrus, when several of the Israelites returned to Palestine,

15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

16 And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall *that* be done any more.

17 At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

18 In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

19 But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a

goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

20 ¶ Surely *as* a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD.

21 A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping *and* supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, *and* they have forgotten the LORD their God.

22 Return, ye backsliding children, *and* I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou *art* the LORD our God.

23 Truly in vain *is* salvation hoped for from the hills, *and* from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God *is* the salvation of Israel.

24 For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.

25 We lie down in our shame, and our

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Palestine, but only by little and little, and as it were one by one. Spiritually, these promises were fulfilled by the conversion of the Jews to the Gospel, when God gave them pastors, ver. 15. who fed them with true evangelical knowledge. Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, are the pastors referred to in the letter, after the captivity.

Ver. 16. *Neither shall that be done any more*] There can be no doubt to any reader of this and the subsequent verses, that, however they may refer, in their primary sense, to the restoration of the Jews after the Babylonish captivity, they have their full and perfect completion only in the abolition of the law, and the conversion of Jews and Gentiles to the faith of Christ; whereby *both are made one*, fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. See Ephes. ii. 14, &c.

Ver. 19. *But I said, &c.*] *And when I said, How shall I place thee among sons, and give unto thee the land of desire, the inheritance of the glory of the hosts of nations? Then said I, Thou shalt call me, My Father; and thou shalt not turn aside from following me.* The paranomasia is a figure that the Hebrew writers much delight in. But by the *land of desire*, and the *glory of the hosts of nations*, the Christian church, and the privileges of the Gospel-covenant, are here figuratively designed. And the conditions of adoption into the former, and of enjoying the latter, are expressly stated by Christ and his apostles to be the same as are here prescribed; namely, the profession and possession of the true faith, and uniform obedience for the time to come. *Thou shalt call me, My Father; and thou shalt not turn aside from following me.*

VOL. IV.

Ver. 21. *For they have perverted*] *For that they have perverted their way, and had forgotten, &c.*

Ver. 23. *Truly in vain, &c.*] *Certainly there is nothing in the hills but a lie, in the mountains but vanity.* Houb. This refers to the idols, and the high places where they were worshipped. *Shame*, in the next verse, *בשמה* *bošbeth*, signifies the *confusion* arising from the worship of idols. See ch. xi. 13. and Hosea, x. 6.

Ver. 25. *We lie down in our shame*] “God has justly abandoned us to our confusion: he has permitted, that the worship of those idols which we have adored, should serve only to throw us into a condition deplorable as death; into captivity, exile, and oppression.” See Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, When for our sin we deserve to be abandoned, our God is merciful, and not willing that any should perish, as here most eminently appears.

1. Their iniquities were great, numberless, and aggravated. Like the most infamous prostitute, *thou hast played the harlot with many lovers*, multiplying their idols as their cities, chap. xi. 13. and not a high place was in the land where their spiritual adulteries had not been committed. Nay, they had courted others to join them, as a vile prostitute sits by the way, soliciting the traveller; or as the Arabian robber, lying in wait for his prey. Brazen against reproof, they blushed at none of their abominations; but, as if trying how wicked they could be, *thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest*; they glorified in their wickedness, and studied to provoke God to the uttermost. Note; (1.) Lewdness indulged by degrees banishes shame; and,

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and,

confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

and, this last relic of virtue lost, there is no hope of recovery. (2.) The thief who lies in wait for our purse is innocent, compared with the tempter, who, by leading us into sin, would rob us of our souls. (3.) They are advanced to the summit of wickedness, who give an unbounded loose to all their appetites, and know no restraint from sin but the want of ability.

2. God would be perfectly justified in giving them up to destruction. The law was express in case of an adulteress divorced, that she could no more be restored to her husband's bed, for the land would have been polluted thereby. God might, therefore, well treat them in the same manner, by an utter rejection; especially after he had in vain chastised them, by withholding their rain in its season; and instead of repenting they continued hardened under his judgments. *Note;* (1.) If sinners had to do with man instead of God, all reconciliation must be despaired of. (2.) When the heart is stubborn under the rod of correction, it is much to be feared the stroke of final judgment is near.

3. Notwithstanding all that was past, God invites them to return, and directs them in the way. *Return again to me, saith the Lord*, which contains a gracious intimation that he was yet ready to receive them. And the chief of sinners may be assured, whenever they in penitence cry to him, that he will yet speak pardon to them; and therefore *wilt thou not from this time cry unto me?* after such long and treacherous departures, it is high time at last, though late, to begin; and now is the accepted time, when the invitations of mercy are pleading, and without delay to be embraced. And lest, confounded at their guilt, they should not know what to say, God puts words in their mouth, *My Father, thou art the guide of my youth*; as returning prodigals, unworthy to be called children, yet hoping to find in God a merciful father; and as those who, since they have left him, have ever erred and wandered to and fro in misery, and therefore desire to be taken under his care, and henceforward, as in the days of youth, to be guided by his will and word. *Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end?* No; he is God, and not man; and as his majesty is, such is his mercy to all that will return unto him. *Note;* (1.) If a sense of God's grace does not engage the sinner's heart to return, nothing can. (2.) They who begin to be sensible of their departures from God, will be importunate on their knees, to be restored to his forfeited favours. (3.) Whatever fears unbelief may suggest, God is a father, whose tender compassions fail not; and we may confidently trust in his mercy, if we will but return unto him.

2dly, Josiah heartily laboured after the reformation of the people; and the prophet, with his sermons, seconded his pious design; but we find that the labours of both were ineffectual. The kingdom of Judah was become apostate as the kingdom of Israel, and must shortly share her fate.

1. The sin and ruin of backsliding Israel are observed. The prophet, in the history of that kingdom, had seen their

miserable end about ninety years before. They first revolted from David's successors, and then left God's worship for idolatry; not only in Dan and Bethel, but on every mountain and under every green tree their spiritual adulteries were committed. In vain the prophets warned, in vain the patience of God waited, in vain were all his gracious invitations to return; they persisted in their impenitence, and that produced their ruin: God gave them a divorce; thrust them out of his protection, and then they were quickly enslaved, and became a prey to their enemies. *Note;* Backsliders shall sooner or later be filled with their own ways, and rue their own choice.

2. Judah took no warning by the judgment. She is called *her treacherous sister*, sprung from the same stock of Jacob, and, though affecting to cleave to God's temple and worship, false and faithless in her professions. Instead of being awed or reformed by her sister's ruin, she plunged into the same sins, and *played the harlot also*. As abominable as ever Israel had been, she defiled the land, and with such base gods as stocks and stones committed adultery. Yea, notwithstanding the efforts made by the gracious monarch Josiah, and those who assisted him in the work, though for a time the people outwardly appeared reformed, their hearts were as unrenewed as ever, and their professions utterly hypocritical. *Note;* (1.) Appearances may impose upon men, but God trieth the heart. (2.) Hypocrisy is among the greatest sins, and the falsehearted professor may expect to meet an avenging God, as much as the abandoned profligate. (3.) They who will not take warning by others' falls, are hastening to their own ruin.

3. God justifies backsliding Israel more than treacherous Judah. The latter had greater means, greater warnings, and made greater professions, therefore their guilt was more aggravated. This does not excuse Israel, but it adds to Judah's iniquities. *Note;* The more we have received from God of mercies and means, the heavier will be our judgment if we have neglected and abused them.

3dly, Seldom do the prophets proclaim any singular mercies to the Jewish people, but they intersperse some glorious promises of that mercy of all mercies, the coming of the Redeemer, to set up his church universally in the world, to be the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. We have,

1. An invitation to Israel to return. This must be proclaimed towards the north, where now they were captives: *Return, thou backsliding Israel*, ver. 12. and again, *turn, O backsliding children*, ver. 14.—*he is merciful*, and therefore there is hope. *Only acknowledge thine iniquity*, and what less can be enjoined? yea, how can we do otherwise, when we reflect confounded on the past? *that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God*, which relation to him aggravates their guilt; and every penitent sinner desires never to extenuate his sins, but to behold them in all their malignity; and *hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree*, committing idolatry as the vilest of profligates. Thus our particular sin must be confessed; the time, place, circumstances, reflected upon with shame and horror:

and



## CHAP. IV.

God calleth Israel by his promise: he exhorteth Judah to repentance by fearful judgements. A grievous lamentation for the miseries of Judah.

[Before Christ 612.]

**I**F thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away

thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

2 And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

3 ¶ For thus saith the LORD to the men of

*and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord; and such rebellion against the divine law, and rejection of God's warnings, call for deepest humiliation.*

2. The great and precious promises made them to engage their return, which have a particular relation to their deliverance from captivity, when many of the ten tribes joined those of Judah and Benjamin, and embraced the proclamation of Cyrus; but they look farther, and are to be extended to all the Israel of God in Gospel-times, to all who accept of the offers of Gospel-grace, and are in consequence collected into the church of Christ.

[1.] God's anger shall remove, in consequence of their sins being forgiven, on their repentance. *Note; The most powerful means to engage the soul to repent, is the promise of pardon.*

[2.] They should on their penitent return be taken into the same endeared relation to God as before, for *I am married unto you.* *Note; God not only forgives, but in some sense forgets the sins of his penitent people: they are in respect to guilt as if they had never been committed.*

[3.] God will bring them to Zion, into the Gospel-church. *I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, a precious number would accept of proffered mercy—of Gospel-grace.*

[4.] God will give them pastors after his own heart, to feed them with knowledge and understanding; and under such gracious ministrations the souls of the faithful will grow in grace and in meetness for glory. *Note; (1.) They are no pastors who intrude into the ministry without a divine call, but wolves in sheep's clothing. (2.) Christ's true ministers resemble their master in zeal, charity, and labour; the same mind is in them, and by their fruits ye shall know them. (3.) God's word is the food with which Christ's flock must be fed; and every pastor must be a wise householder, thoroughly acquainted with these sacred stores, and skilful to produce what is most suited to the variety of the wants of those to whom he ministers.*

[5.] The typical and ceremonial institutions shall be all abolished. Christ, who is the sum and substance of them, being come, the ark, which was of old their glory, should be no more esteemed or remembered, when the church should be increased, and the Messiah's kingdom be set up.

[6.] The church of God, adorned with his presence and the accession of the Gentiles, would be more glorious, and more resorted to, than the temple with its Shechinah, and Jerusalem in the most frequented solemnities. *They shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, where his glory eminently appears, and his government is with delight obeyed; and all the nations shall be gathered into it from the Gentile lands; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart, being effectually turned from*

idols to serve the living and true God. *Note; Our hearts are evil, very evil; yea, the imaginations of them only evil, till, by divine grace renewed, God gives a new heart, and puts a right spirit within us.*

[7.] All enmity between Israel and Judah shall cease. They shall be united in affection, and become one people; and this was the case after their return from Babylon, and prefigured the union of Jews and Gentiles, and that perfect harmony which shall subsist between them when joined in the same body, of which Christ is the living Head.

3. Though on their part they were utterly unworthy of these mercies, yet God directs them what to plead for, and will accept it on their return. *How shall I put thee among the children? so undeserving as they were of the relation, and of all the great blessings provided, of a pleasant land, and goodly heritage of the hosts of nations who possessed it, till God cast them out, to make room for his people. Of such favours they might well despair; but he proposes to them a way for overcoming the objections drawn from their unworthiness, consistent with his own glory. Thou shalt call me, My Father, returning in faith to him, through the Son of his love, and shalt not turn away from me, but approve henceforward their fidelity unshaken.* *Note; (1.) When we consider what we are by nature, and what we have been in practice, we may well wonder how it is possible that God should ever put us among his children. (2.) When by faith we truly turn to God, the vilest sinners and the foulest backsliders shall be advanced to the transcendent dignity of being counted the sons of God.*

4thly, According to God's gracious invitation, we have Israel's penitent return. Like an adulterous wife, who had eloped from her husband, so had they departed from God; but now they begin to be convinced of their guilt and danger, and lament them.

1. They openly and aloud bewail their iniquities, on those high places before the scene of their abominations, and with tears in prayer acknowledge that they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God. *Note; (1.) When do we so much need that our head should be waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears, as when we remember our past rebellions against, and ingratitude towards the blessed God? (2.) Forgetfulness of God is at the root of all our sins. (3.) When the sinner is driven to a throne of grace, to unbolom his bitter anguish, he will ever find a God that heareth prayer.*

2. God graciously invites them to come to him, backsliding children as they had been, and promises on their return to heal their backslidings and restore them again to his grace and favour. *Note; (1.) God is more willing to hear than we to pray; and not a tear fails from the eye of his penitents, but it is noted in his book. (2.) The*

Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the forekins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

5 Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defended cities.

6 Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.

7 The lion is come up from his thicket,

and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.

8 For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us.

9 And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.

10 Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.

11 At that time shall it be said to this people

finer's backslidings are then healed, when God pardons the past, and by his grace renews the heart, and stamps his image on the soul.

(3.) Genuine penitents earnestly and instantly accept his call, and echo back, *Behold we come unto thee, without delay, without reserve; for thou art the Lord our God; yea, they will soon be enabled to add, late our offended but now our reconciled God, in whose favour we have a sure interest, to whose service we devote ourselves, and on whom alone our dependance is placed. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: their idol-gods and human-confidences they now renounce, convinced of their vanity and insufficiency. Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel: out of him there is no salvation; in him there is all sufficiency to save to the uttermost; and as our God we may be assured of his power and grace to interpose on our behalf. While thus they express their confidence in him, they own their sin and shame, especially their idolatry, which they and their fathers had committed, and the dreadful consequences of which they felt to their confusion, in the curse of God upon all the labour of their hands, on their families and possessions; and own that the visitation was altogether righteous, because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God.* Note; (1.) Penitent sinners ever take shame and confusion of face to themselves, and justify God in his judgments. (2.) The sense of our own great unworthiness must not discourage us from exercising faith on the divine promises. (3.) There is a salvation wrought out for sinners, by which the most desperate may still find mercy through a Redeemer, and a reconciled God. (4.) When we return to Christ, we must renounce all other confidences, and make mention of his strength and righteousness only.

#### CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1. *If thou wilt return—return unto me] If thou wilt return—thou shalt return. [Thou shalt dwell with me. Houb.] If thou wilt remove thy idols, thou shalt not be removed.* In the former part, says Houbigant, the conversion of their

[hearts and] morals is spoken of; in the latter, the stability of their government. These words are evidently a continuation of the discourse beginning at the 6th verse of the preceding chapter, and of the prophet's address to the Israelitish captives in the 20th verse of the same chapter.

Ver. 2. *And the nations shall bless, &c.]* This is a prediction of the Gospel-times, when the heathens should join with the Israelites in paying all solemn acts of worship and devotion to the true God only, and in ascribing all honour and glory to him, and to his only Son, the Messiah, in whom all the nations were to be blessed. Literally, it is, "The nations shall wish the same blessings for themselves, as the God of Israel hath bestowed upon his people; nor shall withhold their praise from him, who hath given so great peace and prosperity to those who worship him." See Houb.

Ver. 3. *Break up your fallow ground, &c.]* That is, "Purge and purify the field of your hearts by true repentance." See Deut. x. 16. Rom. ii. 29. Exod. vi. 12. Acts vii. 51. Coloss. ii. 11. and Houb.

Ver. 4. *Circumcise yourselves]* Circumcision, as well as baptism, had a moral import, and denoted the obligation of putting away all sinful lusts of the flesh, every irregular and inordinate affection and appetite. Compare Deut. x. 16. xxx. 6. Rom. ii. 29. Col. ii. 11.

Ver. 5, 6. *Blow ye the trumpet]* "Sound the alarm, that every one may save himself in the defended cities; the enemy is come into the field; he hath set up his standard, the lion from his thicket [ver. 7.]; Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the destroyer of nations; so called, as the Almighty had given not only Judæa, but also all the neighbouring countries, into his hands." See ch. ii. 15. xlviii. 8. li. 47—49. Instead of *gather together, we may read, cry aloud, or make a full cry.* Comp. ch. xiii. 8.

Ver. 9. *Shall perish]* Shall sink.

Ver. 10. *Then said I, &c.] And shall say, &c.* The passage is very plain, from this version which I have given. According to the common interpretation it must mean, "Thou hast suffered this people to be deceived by false prophets:"



and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse.

12 *Even* a full wind from those *places* shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them.

13 Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots *shall be* as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.

14 O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

15 For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim.

16 Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, *that* watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah.

17 As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD.

18 Thy way and thy doings have procured these *things* unto thee; this *is* thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.

19 ¶ My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

20 Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, *and* my curtains in a moment.

21 How long shall I see the standard, *and* hear the sound of the trumpet?

22 For my people *is* foolish, they have not known me; they *are* sottish children, and they have none understanding: they *are* wise

“prophets:” for God, in the language of Scripture, is often said to *do* that which he barely allows or suffers to be done.

Ver. 11—13. *A dry wind, &c.*] The prophet here describes the Chaldean army coming up for the destruction of Judæa, under the metaphor of a hot pestilential wind, which sweeps away multitudes in a moment, blasts the fruits of the earth, and spreads desolation every where around. The passage, like that in the preceding verses, is spirited and sublime; but it loses a good deal of elegance in our version. Houbigant renders it thus, *Behold, a wind hangs over the mountains of the deserts; behold, it shall come upon the daughter of my people, but not to fan, or to cleanse: ver. 12. A mighty wind shall thence come upon her, and then at length will I declare my judgment concerning them, or her: ver. 13. Behold, as clouds it shall hang over; its chariots shall be as a whirlwind; its horses swifter than eagles, &c.* Of the malignancy of the south wind blowing over the deserts of Arabia, travellers have given dreadful accounts. The effect of this wind is, not only to render the air extremely hot and scorching, but to fill it with poisonous and suffocating vapours. It sometimes becomes a whirlwind, raising up large quantities of sand, so as to darken the air, and not seldom to bury underneath the unfortunate traveller. The most violent storms that Judæa was subject to came from that quarter. See Bishop’s Lowth’s note on Isai. xxi. 1. and Mr. Harmer’s citation from Maillet’s Memoirs; ch. i. obs. 16.

Ver. 15. *For a voice declareth from Dan*] *For lo! a sound of devastation comes from Dan; lo! a tumult is heard from the mountains of Ephraim.* Houb.

Ver. 16. *Watchers come, &c.*] By these *watchers* are meant, those who precede an army, and announce its approach, whom Cæsar in his Commentaries calls *antecursores*, or *antecursores*. Houbigant renders the first clause

of the next verse, *Like the keepers of a field do they surround her*: that is, “These couriers, or spies of the Chaldean army, are as diligent in their observation of Judah and Jerusalem, as the keepers of a field are of the cattle, vineyards, &c. under their care.”

Ver. 17. *As keepers of a field*] Mr. Harmer cites from Sir John Chardin’s manuscript the following remark on this place: “As in the East, pulse, roots, &c. grow in open and unclosed fields, when they begin to be fit to gather, they place guards, if near a great road more, if distant fewer, who place themselves in a round about these grounds, as is practised in Arabia.” Ch. v. obs. 15.

Ver. 18. *Thy way, &c.*] *Thy ways and thy doings will procure thee these things: this is thy wickedness; for they will be bitter, and will reach to thy heart.* “Whatsoever happens to you, happens by your own fault, who have turned the sweet goodness of the Lord into bitterness, and have compelled him, however unwilling, to rage against you,” says St. Jerome on the place.

Ver. 19, 20. *My bowels, &c.*] *My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at the centre, or, in the midst, of my heart; my heart is tumultuous within me.* This terrific vision is full of the divinest enthusiasm. The calamities described are presented to the mind in such lively colours, the images are so crowded, and arranged with so much art, and the breaks and apostrophes are so animated, that we seem to be involved in the same scene of misery with the prophet. The reader will observe, that the destruction of the land by the Chaldeans, spoken of in the 20th verse, is painted, ver. 23. 26. in the same colours, as if universal nature was about to fall again into its original chaos. See Bishop Lowth. We may read ver. 20. *Breach hits upon breach, or destruction dashes upon destruction, &c.* Jeremiah compares the cities of Judah, at the end of this verse, to *tents*; and he expresses the facility wherewith the enemy made himself

to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

23 I beheld the earth, and, lo, *it was* without form and void; and the heavens, and they *had* no light.

24 I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly.

25 I beheld, and, lo, *there was* no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.

26 I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place *was* a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, *and* by his fierce anger.

27 For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.

28 For this shall the earth mourn, and the

heavens above be black: because I have spoken *it*, I have purposed *it*, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.

29 The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city *shall be* forsaken, and not a man dwell therein.

30 And *when* thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; *thy* lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life.

31 For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, *and* the anguish as of her that

himself master of them, by that of the taking up or overturning a tent.

*Ver. 22. For my people is foolish*] Some have supposed that these words, as well as the preceding ones, are to be referred to God; but they suit the prophet much better, who speaks here, as commissioned by the divine authority to preach to this people. See ch. v. 21.

*Ver. 23—26. I beheld the earth, &c.*] The images, under which the prophet represents the approaching desolation as foreseen by him, are such as are familiar to the Hebrew poets on the like occasions. (See Lowth De Sac. Poesi Heb. Præl. ix. and his note on Isaiah, ch. xiii. 10.) But the assemblage is finely made, so as to delineate all together a most striking and interesting picture of a ruined country, and to show the author's happy talent for pathetic description. The earth is brought back, as it were, to its primitive state of chaos and confusion; the cheerful light of the heavens is withdrawn, and succeeded by a dismal gloom; the mountains tremble and the hills shake, under dreadful apprehensions of the Almighty's displeasure; a frightful solitude reigns around; not a vestige is to be seen of any of the human race; even the birds themselves have deserted the fields, unable to find any longer in them their usual food. The face of the country in the once most fertile parts of it, now overgrown with briars and thorns, assumes the dreary wildness of the desert. The cities and villages are either thrown down and demolished by the hand of the enemy, or crumble into ruins of their own accord for want of being inhabited.

*Ver. 27. Yet will I not make a full end*] Some understand this as a gracious promise, that though God would punish Jerusalem, yet he would not utterly forget her, but hereafter restore and rebuild her. See the next chapter, ver. 10. and 18. Others understand it, as referring to still further calamities. Accordingly, Houbigant renders it, *Yet this is not all which I will do*; meaning, that not only the country should be totally desolated by the Chaldeans, but that the whole state and polity of the Jews should be entirely subverted, ver. 28.

*Ver. 29. The whole city shall flee*] *All the cities have fled, &c. All the cities are forsaken, and there are no inhabitants in them.* Houb.

*Ver. 30. Though thou rentest thy face with painting*] See 2 Kings, ix. 30. The prophet here carries on the idea wherewith he began, describing Jerusalem under the figure of a harlot, dressing herself up to captivate lovers. See Ezek. xvi. 15, &c. Houbigant renders the verse, *And thou, when about to be spoiled, what will it profit thee to put on purple, to deck thyself with golden ornaments, to enlarge thine eyes with paint [black lead, or stibium]? In vain wilt thou make thyself fair; for all thy lovers despise thee, and seek thy life.*

*Ver. 31. For I have heard*] The prophet here pathetically describes Jerusalem as a woman in travail, bewailing the loss of her children by the Chaldeans, and in vain imploring assistance. Houbigant renders the last clause, *For my soul is faint within me, because of the murdered; those of my children who have been murdered by the enemy.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Israel had made penitent professions of returning; God accepts them, and directs them in the way.

*If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me; or, If thou wilt return unto me, thou shalt return;* either let them immediately execute their purpose; or it is promised that, on their doing so, God will bring them back from their dispersion; *and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, all their idolatrous practices and images, then shalt thou not remove into captivity again; or, if thou shalt not move to and fro, be fickle and wavering, but steadfast in their adherence to God, then his blessing would be upon them. And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, making no more mention of their false gods; in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness;* solemnly, and with strictest regard to truth. *And the nations shall bless themselves in him;* being called into communion with God's Israel, and counting themselves happy in the pardon, grace, and glory revealed and offered in the Redeemer; *and in him shall they glory, renouncing all other confidence, and glorying in the fulness*

of

bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, *that bewaileth herself, that* spreadeth her hands, *saying, Woe is me now!* for my soul is wearied because of murderers.

of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Note;* (1.) They who truly turn to God must put away *all* their abominations, and no allowed sin be spared. (2.) An oath is an act of religious worship; and therefore to swear by any creature is blasphemy against God. (3.) Every oath should be taken *in truth*, with scrupulous adherence to it, asserting nothing of which we have not the fullest confidence, nor promising aught that we do not really intend to perform: *in judgment*, when called upon before a magistrate; or solemnly, not rashly, or in common conversation, but where the importance of the subject makes such an appeal to God lawful: *and in righteousness*, that justice may be done, and God glorified.

2dly, The prophet, having discharged his message to the men of Israel, and set forth their repentance, here addresses himself to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, whom he would provoke to jealousy by example, and excite to the like repentance. We have,

1. Their duty. This is represented to them by two familiar images. [1.] *Break up your fallow-ground, and sow not among thorns.* Not that of their own natural ability they could do this: what God calls them to, he offers them grace sufficient to perform. This is a striking image of man's natural heart, bringing forth no fruit to God; barren of all grace; hard and impenitent; unfenced, where every lawless appetite rages uncontrouled; overgrown with the briars and thorns of vile and corrupt affections; and therefore *nigh unto burning*, Heb. vi. 7, 8. This fallow-ground must be broken up before it can produce fruit; and this is done by the word of God, convincing the sinner's conscience, and opening his heart to receive the seed of the Gospel, as the plough divides the soil, Heb. iv. 12. and the briars and thorns being rooted up, the seed is not choked, but brings forth fruit unto perfection. [2.] *Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart.* They placed great dependence on circumcision: but without the circumcision of the heart, and cutting off their corrupt affections, that which was outward in the flesh signified nothing. *Note;* All institutions and forms, however strictly observed, can profit us nothing, if the spirit and power of godliness be wanting within: nay, they serve but to delude and deceive the soul that trusts in them.

2. Their danger, great and imminent. *Loft my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.* Delays are dangerous. To-day, whilst it is called to-day, they are warned not to harden their hearts. *Note;* (1.) It is sin which provokes God's wrath, and kindles the unquenchable flames of hell. (2.) Nothing is so terrible as falling impenitent into the hands of that God who is a consuming fire. (3.) The moment of delay which God affords us should be eagerly seized, before the flames kindle round us; for then it would be too late to call or return.

3dly, The judgments coming upon Judah and Jerusalem are foretold, as an awakening motive to their speedy repentance.

1. The alarm is spread through the land of the invading foe coming from the north; and they who are dispersed in the country are called to fly for safety to the defended cities; flight being thought their only resource where resistance was vain.

2. The approach of the Chaldeans, with Nebuchadnezzar at their head, is described by a variety of images, expressive of the *great destruction* and ravages which would ensue. As a *lion*, pinched with hunger, sallies furiously from his thicket on the defenceless flocks; so fierce, so cruel, would the king of Babylon come at the head of his armies, *the destroyer of the Gentiles*, and now of the Jews, to spread desolations on every side; as a *dry wind*, sharp and piercing, violent and raging, which, instead of fanning or cleansing the grain, would sweep with resistless fury all before it. Thick as *clouds* they advance, and swift as the *whirlwind*: *their horses are swifter than eagles*; and therefore flight was impracticable as opposition was vain. *From Dan*, the most northern border, the first alarm is spread, that the nations may hear who were to drink of the same cup, and especially *Jerusalem*, against which this armament is intended: *behold watchers come from a far country*, threatening ruin to all the cities of Judah; and shouting, as confident of victory. *As keepers of a field*, who guard the corn, and prevent all entrance into it, so should these cut off from Jerusalem all supplies, and suffer none to escape. See 2 Kings, xxv.

3. The cause of the judgments is their sin. *Thou hast been rebellious against me, saith the Lord, thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee*: they had none to blame but themselves for what they suffered; it was the just recompence of their iniquities: *this is thy wickedness*, the fruit of it; *because it is bitter*, both the sin and the punishment; *because it reacheth unto thine heart*, a mortal blow, an utter destruction. *Note;* (1.) Whatever we suffer, we have only ourselves to blame; our sins are our tormentors. (2.) If we feel not the bitterness of sin to repent of it, we shall feel the bitterness of the punishment when repentance will come too late.

4. The terrible consequences of these judgments are described. Their hearts fail them. The king and princes, who should have roused the people to a brave defence, have lost all spirit, and cannot conceal their coward fears; the priests, whose office it was to animate them to the battle, are themselves astonished, and unable to found a blast from the silver trumpets; and the false prophets, who had deceived them with visions of peace, are dumb with horror and amazement. Every warrior is sunk in despair, every face gathers blackness, and one universal groan is heard, *Woe unto us, for we are spoiled.* In vain then will they gird themselves with sackcloth, lament and howl; their desolations are determined, and *the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back*: the decree of their ruin is gone forth, I will give sentence against them; and their destruction is inevitable; because the measure of their iniquity is full. *Note;* (1.) A sense of guilt makes men cowards. (2.) Wicked priests and false prophets, who deceive the people with visions of peace,

## C H A P. V.

*The judgments of God upon the Jews for their perverseness, for their adultery, for their impiety, for their contempt of God, and for their great corruption in the civil state, and ecclesiastical.*

[Before Christ 612.]

**R**UN ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and

seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.

2 And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely.

3 O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have

peace, will find God's terror around them in a judgment-day.

5. The prophet laments the deceptions of the people through their false prophets, to believe whose lies God in just judgment gave them up, which was among the forest of their visitations. They had promised them peace; but now the sword reached unto the soul, drenched in the blood of the slain. *Note;* (1.) Among the heaviest curses of God this must be justly reckoned, when he gives up the heart to delusion, and suffers the blind to lead the blind. (2.) The faithful ministers of God behold with deep concern those who pretend to be teachers of God's word vending their false doctrines, and lulling the souls of sinners into a fatal security, endeavouring to prejudice them against the truth, and prevent every awakening impression which the zealous and true preachers seek to make upon their hearts.

6. He seeks to snatch them as a brand from the burning. *O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.* He deals faithfully; not as the false prophets, glossing over their iniquities, but charging them home upon their consciences. Their heart was wicked; there the deep root of bitterness lay; and from that they must be cleansed, if they would be saved. And he expostulates on the folly and danger of delaying their repentance, *How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?* too long had they done so; it was high time to awake out of sleep, the judgments of God were hastening on; in a moment it would be too late to prevent them. *Note;* (1.) While wickedness continues indulged in the heart, there can be no salvation hoped for. (2.) There is but one fountain which is capable of washing the sinner's heart from his iniquities, and that was opened in the Redeemer's side—of blood and water: *blood*, to pardon the deepest guilt of sin; *water*, to purify from every stain of corruption. The pardoning and sanctifying grace of Jesus are inseparable. (3.) Vain thoughts are sinful; and if our hearts are not purged from these imaginations, our ways will be quickly perverse. (4.) When we consider how short our life is, how much is past, how uncertain the moment yet to come, it should be an awakening admonition to seize the present now, and seek to God to-day, while it is called to-day.

4thly, With deep concern and anguish the prophet beheld the miseries coming upon his people: his bowels yearned over the distress of his country, and his heart throbbled with bitter anguish:

1. For their sins: *My people is foolish.* This is the character God gives them; for sin is the greatest folly: for they have not known me: in name and in profession they had owned him, but had no experimental knowledge of him as their God. *They are foolish children*, stupid and un-

tractable; and they have none understanding, respecting their true happiness, or the means of attaining it. *They are wise to do evil*; cunning to contrive and accomplish their sinful schemes; a wisdom which is their curse; but to do good they have no knowledge, nor do they desire to know; their inclination is averse to it. Such is the character of every natural man, till through grace he repents, and God takes away the blindness, and cures the perverseness of his heart, by bestowing on him the wisdom and grace which come from above.

2. For their sufferings: and these are enlarged upon and strongly described. The trumpet announces the alarm of war, swift and sudden the destruction spreads, and successive as Job's messengers of evil, the dreadful tidings fly, of one city taken after another, till the whole land is spoiled, and all the country where the shepherds pitched their tents ravaged; no end of the calamity appears. The banners of the invading foe are displayed, and their warlike instruments are heard on every side. The country, utterly wasted, appears like the first chaos, when the earth was without form and void, and darkness upon the face of the deep; or it may be applied to the utter confusion of their affairs, political and ecclesiastical: and the heavens, as if unwilling to look upon their abominations, veil their bright luminaries with darkness: or so darkened and bewildered were their kings and princes, not knowing what course to take. The mountains trembled, and the hills fled before the face of the offended God; such terrors seized the most stout-hearted warriors. Universal desolation seems to reign through that once populous and fruitful land: the cities, without an inhabitant, lie in ruins; the country is wasted and barren as a rock; the very birds are fled, no food remaining for them: and all this arising from God's fierce anger, which is itself the heaviest part of the judgment: and this is not the case with one city or part of the country only, the whole is utterly ruined. Affrighted at the horsemen and bowmen, they flee to rocks and thickets to hide themselves: the cities are deserted and destroyed, and not a living soul remains in them; and, but for one word of mercy, they might expect a total extirpation, and their very name to be blotted out from under heaven: but God will not make a full end, a faithful remnant shall escape. *Note;* (1.) These awful images of Judæa's destruction give some faint description of that great and terrible day of the Lord, when his wrath shall finally be poured out on the ungodly; the heavens be dissolved, the earth burnt up, and all created nature return to its original chaos. (2.) Whatever visitations come upon us from the hands of men, we must look farther for the cause of them, if we would profit under them. (3.) In all God's judgments below, some

not grieved; thou hast consumed them, *but* they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

4 Therefore I said, Surely these *are* poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, *nor* the judgment of their God.

5 I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, *and* the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, *and* burst the bonds.

6 Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, *and* a wolf of the evenings shall

spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, *and* their backslidings are increased.

7 ¶ How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by *them that are* no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.

8 They were *as* fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife.

9 Shal I not visit for these *things*? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

some mercy is mingled with vengeance; but hereafter there will be judgment without mercy.

3. Their sufferings are remediless. God will not help them; they cannot deliver themselves; and their human confidences will fail, and leave them in despair. If the earth mourn, and the heavens are black with storms of wrath, it is because God hath spoken their doom. His purpose is fixed, his sentence irrevocable: since they refused to repent of their sins, he will not repent of his judgments for them. He being against them, what can they do? whither can they go? Their own force is insufficient to resist the invading foe, and as vain their hope in their confederates. Though like a prostitute, that by painting and dress seeks to conceal her wrinkles, and hide her decays, Judah courted her allies, *in vain shalt thou make thyself fair*, every wile that she can use will no longer secure her gailants: sensible of her ruined state, they will forsake her in the day of her calamity, and help forward her destruction. In agonies, as a woman in the pangs of the most difficult travail, the daughter of Zion shall cry out, *Wo is me now*; her sufferings so intolerable; her case so desperate; *my soul is wearied because of murderers*; either those who dwell in Jerusalem, at whose hands the blood which they had shed was now required; or through those horrid massacres made by the Chaldean sword. Note; (1.) They who fall into adversity will generally feel, to their cost, the vanity of creature confidences. The friendships of the world are faithless: God is the only friend who never fails. (2.) The paint of duties and devotions can stand us in little stead, if the deformity of sin continues underneath. (3.) They are remediless indeed whom God abandons.

#### CHAP. V.

Ver. 1. *Run ye to and fro*] This is a continuation of the preceding discourse, wherein the Almighty justifies the severities of the judgments denounced in the former chapter. The expressions are strong, but not to be taken precisely in the letter; signifying only the extreme degeneracy of the times, and the great want of justice and piety in Jerusalem: instead of *pardon it*, we should read, *pardon her*.

Ver. 2. *Surely they swear falsely*] *Nevertheless*, &c. See ver. 7. and ch. iv. 2. Let what we say be ever so true, if

we believe it not to be so, we have not spoken truth. Custom has brought many to church and to meeting, who forget why they came thither when they are there; and too frequently do many of us find ourselves at our prayers, when we least think of Him, to whom we pretend to direct those prayers. And as they whom we trust, and are familiar with, have much more power to do us hurt, to betray us, and expose us to ruin, than our open and professed enemies, towards whom we stand upon our guard, and whom the world looks upon as unjust, or at least as disaffected towards us; so God himself suffers more dishonour from those who pretend to his service, profess the religion enjoined by him, and in their lives and actions practise those things which are inconsistent with, and destructive to that religion, than from those who really understand him not, and therefore never make a shew of looking after him. Let us flatter ourselves as we may, with an opinion of the saving power of our true and right ideas of God, and our Saviour, and of his Holy Spirit; of our being Christians and true members of the church of Christ, it is to be very reasonably feared, that the pure confest atheist, who does not know God at all, and therefore never thinks of pleasing him; who believes that there are no such places as heaven and hell, and so considers not the ways which lead to either; but determines all his hopes and fears within that span of life which nature allows us in this world; who either has not seen those books which we call *the Scripture*, or, if he have, looks upon them as the invention, or fancy, or speculation of men, and so no further the objects of his faith, than they are the objects of his reason: I say, we may reasonably believe this direct plain Atheist to be less condemnable, than the practical, hypocritical Atheist, the proud false traducer of the fame and reputation of his neighbour, or the cruel and rebellious oppressor of the innocent; who, while with his lips he acknowledges God to be the Creator of heaven and earth, and his Holy Scriptures to be the voice of his mouth, does yet foolishly in his heart deny the being of a God, by neglecting to do all that his divine majesty hath enjoined, and doing all that he hath expressly forbidden to be done. As good parts and education, example and good conversation, are so many aggravations against him whose mind is not improved by these extraordinary advantages; so, doubtless, they who should be found atheists in Christian con-

10 ¶ Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they *are* not the LORD'S.

11 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD.

12 They have belied the LORD, and said, *It is not He*; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine:

13 And the prophets shall become wind, and the word *is* not in them: thus shall it be done unto them.

14 Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of Hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

15 ¶ Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: *it is* a mighty nation, *it is* an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.

16 Their quiver *is* as an open sepulchre, they *are* all mighty men.

17 And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, *which* thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and

thy fig-trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.

18 Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you.

19 And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these *things* unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land *that is* not yours.

20 ¶ Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying,

21 Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not.

22 Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand *for* the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over *it*?

23 But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

24 Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain,

gregations, who magnify God in their opinions and discourses, and contemn him in their practices, have a more dismal account to make, than the most impious men who have only breathed in heathen and barbarous climates.

Ver. 3. *Are not thine eyes upon the truth?*] The eyes turned upon, or towards an object, denote, not only a diligent inspection and nice discernment of it, but also an earnest expectation or looking after it. The phrase may here be taken in both senses, that God both seeth and discerneth the truth, and also expects it from others, especially from those who call upon his name in attestation of it.

Ver. 4. *Therefore I said, Surely, &c.*] The meaning of this verse is sufficiently plain from that which follows. Houbigant, however, renders it better thus: *But I thought thus with myself; these men of mean condition are certainly foolish, because they have not known, &c.*

Ver. 6. *Wherefore a lion, &c.*] By the *lion*, say some, Nebuchadnezzar is meant: see chap. iv. 7. By the *wolf*, Nabuzaradan; and by the *leopard*, Antiochus Epiphanes. Others by the *lion* think that the Babylonians are understood; by the *wolf* the Medes and Persians; and by the *leopard* the Greeks: while others again, with more reason, suppose that Nebuchadnezzar alone is here pointed at; violent and courageous as a *lion*; rapacious, greedy, devouring, as a *wolf*; swift, lively, and active as a *leopard*. See Grotius and Calmer.

Ver. 10. *Go ye up, &c.*] See ver. 17. and the note on ver. 27. of the preceding chapter. Instead of *take away*

*her battlements, &c.* Houbigant reads, *Leave her foundations, for they are the Lord's.* See his note. It is well known from history, that the Chaldeans left the foundations of the walls of Jerusalem, which Jeremiah here foretells.

Ver. 12. *And said, It is not He*] אֵין הוּ *lo hu.* "Not He;" that is, either, he hath not spoken, or, he will not do as the prophets have threatened in his name. See Psalm xciv. 7.

For they said, Jehovah will not see,  
Neither will the God of Jacob regard.

Ver. 13. *And the prophets shall become wind!*] These are the words of the wicked. "The prophets," say they, "shall become wind;" all their prophecies are vain and to no purpose. *The word* [that is to say, of true prophecy] *is not in them: Thus shall it be done unto them;* nay, the very "evils which they denounce upon others shall happen to themselves."

Ver. 15—17. *I will bring a nation upon you from far*] The prophet in these verses marks out the Chaldeans by their distance, by their power and valour; by their antiquity, by their language, unknown to the Jews; by their arms, their might, and their cruelty. Instead of, *Which thy sons and thy daughters should eat*, in ver. 17. many versions read, *They shall devour thy sons and thy daughters;* that is to say, by famine and the sword.

Ver. 19. *So shall ye serve strangers*] Some understand and



both the former and the latter, in his season : he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

25 Your iniquities have turned away these *things*, and your sins have withholden good *things* from you.

26 For among my people are found wicked *men* : they lay wait, as he that setteth snares ; they set a trap, they catch men.

27 As a cage is full of birds, so *are* their houses full of deceit : therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

28 They are waxen fat, they shine : yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked : they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper ; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

29 Shall I not visit for these *things* ? saith the LORD ; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?

30 ¶ A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land ;

31 The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means ; and my

and read this, *strange gods* ; but it seems best to understand it of strange people. " As you have refused to have me " for your God, your master, and king, you shall have " other kings and masters in a strange land, and shall experience the difference between my dominion, and that " of those severe and tyrannical masters."

*Ver. 24. Let us now fear the Lord*] The vicissitudes of seasons, of cold and heat, of drought and moisture, so wisely fitted for the growth of the fruits of the earth, and other uses of human life, are so remarkable a proof of the being of a God, and his providence, as to be obvious to the meanest capacity ; and on this account they are frequently insisted on by the inspired writers. The prophet seems here to have had an eye to the sanction of the law, Lev. xxvi. 4. The former rain fell just after sowing-time ; the latter rain was just before harvest, to plump and fill the ears ; and is called by Joel the latter rain of the first month, at which time the harvest begun. In chap. viii. 13. 20. and xiv. i. 18. the prophet speaks of a dearth that happened before the siege of Jerusalem ; which, says Calmet, is different from that here spoken of ; though some are of a contrary opinion, and imagine that one and the same dearth is referred to in these different places. See Calmet, and Taylor's Script. Vind. p. 341.

*Ver. 27. As a cage is full of birds*] A trap-cage. כלוב *kelub*, comes from כלב *keleb*, a dog ; and this name was undoubtedly given to the trap-cage, because it served the same purpose as a dog in assisting to catch game. That sort of trap-cage also seems to be a lured to, in which tame birds are put to hop and fly about as a decoy to others.

*Ver. 28. Yea, they overpass, &c.*] Yea, they have exceeded all expression of wickedness ; or, have been wicked beyond expression. Houbigant renders it, Therefore they burst forth into words of iniquity.

*Ver. 31. The prophets prophesy falsely*] Instead of, The priests bear rule by their means, Houbigant and others render it, And the priests give them their hands ; that is to say, approve, applaud, and unite with them in the same false and destructive measures ; both priests and prophets agreeing to speak pleasing things to the people, in order to support their own interest and authority : The consequence of which must be, a total corruption of manners, and so utter ruin to the state.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, God will ever be justified in his judgments : and when he visits, verily there is a cause.

We have here,

1. The many and aggravated sins of the Jews.

[1.] All truth and honesty were banished. Search Jerusalem throughout, in all the places of concourse, and neither a magistrate could be found upright, nor a man faithful, such an universal corruption was spread through all ranks and degrees. To spare Sodom, ten righteous were required : to spare Jerusalem, one it seems would have sufficed, and is not found ; at least no such was to be met in the places of public resort, where, if a few remained, they dared not appear.

[2.] They were false-hearted hypocrites. Some, indeed, made profession of religion, and pretended a regard for truth ; but they were perjured, and faithless in all their vows of fidelity to God, whose eye was upon them, and from whom they could not be concealed. Note ; (1.) Perjury is a crying sin, and there is an avenging God who hears. (2.) They who are insincere in their professions of godliness, are more guilty than the openly abandoned.

[3.] They were obstinately hardened. All God's visitations produced no humiliation : they neither grieved for the sins which provoked him, nor sought to answer the end of his corrections ; but daringly braved the divine vengeance, as neither ashamed of their wickedness, nor afraid of the punishment, and insolently refused to return. Note ; When judgments have no effect, and men grow impudent in sin, their case appears desperate.

[4.] They were shamefully ignorant. They knew not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. They understood neither his word, the manner of his worship, nor the designs of his providences. But the prophet was willing to hope that these were foolish, because poor, and might have less opportunities of improvement : yet he found the case no way mended with the rich. Note ; (1.) Prevailing ignorance of the things of God cannot but be accompanied with abounding iniquity. (2.) Though high attainments of knowledge may not be in their power, all truths needful to salvation the poorest may learn : so that they are without excuse : for wilful ignorance is wilful sin.

[5.] The great had utterly cast off the divine government. Among the princes, the priests, and the elders, at least, he might expect wisdom and piety, and that they would pay attention to his word. But just the reverse : whatever their knowledge was, their practice was avowed ungodliness ; breaking the yoke, and bursting the bonds of God's commands.

people love to have it so : and what will ye do in the end thereof ?

commands. *Note* ; In a corrupted state, the higher men's stations are, we may expect to find in them the greater abominations.

[6.] Their idolatries were infamous. Forfaking God, they paid their worship to stocks and stones, and swore by them that were no gods. Well might he therefore say, *How shall I pardon thee for this ?*

[7.] They gave full scope to their bestial lusts, abused the plenty which God bestowed, to pamper their bodies ; and, having made provision for the flesh, so impudent and barefaced were they in their indulgences, that in troops they assembled in the harlots' houses ; and added adultery to their other crimes, to fill up the measure of their iniquities. *Note* ; They who would keep from grosser pollutions must bridle their appetites, and shun idleness. If the fuel be prepared, the fire will quickly kindle.

2. Their destruction is threatened by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. As a lion, resistless in strength ; as an evening wolf, fierce with hunger ; and as a leopard, watching, darts on his prey ; so irresistible, ravening, and swift, shall he come to execute God's judgments, to besiege their cities, and rend in pieces those who either come forth to oppose him, or seek to escape : and this because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.

3. God appeals to them for the justice of this procedure. *Shall I not visit for these things ?* The honour of his government, as well as the holiness of his nature, requires that inquisition should be made, and judgment pass upon such offenders. *And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?* His punitive justice is essential to his nature ; and national sins call for national judgments.

adly, The prophet still further prosecutes his subject. We have,

1. The provocations that they have given. Israel and Judah, alike rebellious, have treacherously departed from God's ways and worship, fearless of God's warnings, yea, daring to give the lie to his word in the mouth of his prophets, and vainly promising themselves peace and plenty : as if the threatenings which the prophets denounced were melancholy fancies in their own imaginations, and would prove but as a puff of wind ; and as if their own false prophets were rather to be regarded, retorting their denunciations upon them ; *thus shall it be done unto them, or let it be done*, giving orders to punish the true prophets with the famine and the sword, for presuming to predict such judgments against them. *Note* ; (1.) It is at the bottom of the sinner's presumption and security, that he does not believe God to be so holy as his word declares, and flatters himself there are some reserves of mercy in contradiction to his justice, or that his faithful servants are too severe, and misrepresent his word. (2.) Many now scoff at the preaching of God's prophets as folly, and treat them as visionary enthusiasts, who will shortly find, that what they despise as fictions, and as contrived to frighten the minds of the superstitious, are fearful realities.

2. The punishment threatened for their impenitence. That word of God's prophets which they had despised should fearfully be fulfilled : as fire it should burn, and they be fuel to the flame. Those proud battlements, on which they relied, deserted of God their only sure defence,

shall be easily thrown down by the besieging foe. From far, a mighty nation, an ancient nation, to whom they were utter strangers, marches at God's command against them ; their arrows devouring as the grave, and their warriors so mighty that they cannot stand before them. Their country shall be foraged, wasted, and plundered ; their corn and cattle seized, and themselves and children left to pine with hunger ; their cities ruined, and their garrisons slain with the sword. *Note* ; (1.) God will make sinners know at last whose word shall stand, his or theirs. (2.) Vain are all our confidences, when God hath forsaken us. (3.) The God of Hosts hath all nations at his beck, and soon can make one sinful nation a scourge to its neighbour.

3. In wrath God remembers mercy. For the sake of the faithful few, a full end shall not be made of this sinful nation. *Note* ; When God gives a commission to the sword, he prescribes the bounds ; hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther.

4. God's justice will appear in his judgments. Many of them, quarrelling with their punishment, would charge God foolishly ; and, as if undeserving of this treatment, expostulate with him thereupon : *Wherefore doeth the Lord our God (to whom they hypocritically pleaded relation) all these things unto us ?* The reason is obvious, and the uprightness of his procedure clear ; *then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, my worship and service, and served strange Gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers, the Chaldeans, in a land that is not yours* : and this was a most just retaliation. *Note* ; (1.) It is a sure sign of an unhumiliated heart, when we murmur against and find fault with the severity of our corrections. (2.) They who make themselves servants of sin shall, sooner or later, be made sick of the service.

3dly, When the prophet had to do with a people so obstinate and perverse, he had need cry aloud and spare not. He charges them,

1. With their stupidity and sottishness. They neither used their ears to attend to God's word, nor their eyes to contemplate his works ; but, as if blind and deaf, continued void of understanding. *Note* ; None so blind as those who will not see, or deaf as they who refuse to hear ; and none so criminal as those who, in the midst of means and mercies, choose darkness rather than light.

2. They were destitute of God's fear, notwithstanding the displays of majesty and mercy which they beheld and experienced. They saw the raging seas arise, and threaten to raise another deluge ; yet, by his mighty power shut up as with gates of adamant, the proud waves are stayed, and their limits fixed by a perpetual decree ; and *Fear ye not me ? saith the Lord ; will ye not tremble at my presence ?* Surely this must prove them more senseless, perverse, and disobedient, than these foaming billows. Yet, if his majesty moved them not, his mercy should engage them to fear the Lord and his goodness ; who, with such constant providential care, causeth the rain to descend, *the former and the latter rain in his season*, as would be most conducive to produce a plenteous harvest, which he graciously bestowed upon them. Yet so ungrateful and insensible were they, that all this kindness wrought not on their obdurate souls, nor engaged them to say in their hearts, *Let us now fear the Lord our God*. *Note* ; (1.) If the fear of the Lord be not



C H A P. VI.

*The enemies sent against Judah, encourage themselves: God setteth them on a work because of the sins of the people. The prophet lamenteth the judgments of God because of their sins: he proclaimeth God's wrath: he calleth the people to mourn for the judgment on their sins.*

[Before Christ 612.]

**O** YE children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set

up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.

2 I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman.

3 The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch *their* tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place.

4 Prepare ye war against her; arise, and

in our hearts, neither the works of his power, nor the wonders of his providence will affect us: yet will they leave us inexcusable. (2.) Where the fear of God is not, there must be confusion and every evil work.

3. They were obstinately rebellious, and revolted from God: their hearts were apostate from him: and not for a season merely, but they went on in one continued course of iniquity, daily widening the breach, and filling up the measure of their iniquities. *Note*; Such rebels are we all by nature; so foolish, fearless, and revolted: at enmity against God, and hating the restraints of his law, till he by his grace open our eyes, and we return in true penitence to him, and he put his fear in our hearts, and reduce them to the obedience of Christ.

4thly, We have,

1. The miseries which their sins had already brought upon them: *Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.* The heavens had been shut, the earth unfruitful, the seasons unkindly, and their harvests had failed. *Note*; Lesser visitations, slighted, prepare the way for heavier judgments.

2. Their provocations continued as bad as ever, yea, grew worse and worse. Their general character was wickedness, and that the more aggravated as being in profession God's people. They were deceitful, treacherous, oppressive, covetous. They laid snares to entrap and destroy those who any ways interfered with their interests, or were become the objects of their resentment for reproving them for their sins. As a cage with birds set for a decoy, which is filled with those that are caught, so are their houses filled with the gain of fraud and deceit. Thus they become great, and, indulging their appetite out of their ill-gotten wealth, wax fat and shine. *They overpass the deeds of the wicked,* are worse than the heathens around them; or, though pretending to religion, they exceed in iniquity the most abandoned profligates. In vain the fatherless and needy cry for their assistance, to vindicate them from oppression, or relieve them from their distresses; their ears are deaf to their cry; neither as advocates for them, nor as magistrates, do they regard right or justice; and yet, astonishing to tell! they prosper. Yet surely they fatten but for the slaughter. But, above all other crimes, *a wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land,* enough to make the ears of every one that heareth it to tingle, and be amazed at the pitch of impicity to which they are arrived: *The prophets prophesy falsely,* see lying divinations, and visions of peace for this devoted people; and, far from being discountenanced, *the priests, or princes* as the word signifies also, espouse them, and oppose them against the true prophets as the tools of their ambi-

tion, that they may bear rule by their means, supporting themselves by a combination in iniquity; and my people, who should have espoused his cause against such a confederacy of iniquity, *love to have it so*; were well enough pleased with such priests as flattered them in their vices, and prophesied smooth things; and with rulers who took no care to execute the laws which should have restrained them. *Note*; (1.) An honest man, in this wicked world, is in great danger of being a prey; for, unable to speak lies and act deceitfully, he often cannot deal on even terms. (2.) We are here frequently struck with the view of prosperous wickedness: but let us not be staggered: mark the end of those men. (3.) Sin is a horrible thing; we need startle at it. (4.) They who pretend a commission from God, yet by their lies contradict his revealed word, are the most dangerous deceivers.

3. The consequences of these iniquities would be fatal. God will visit for their sins: his justice requires that condign punishment be executed on such offenders; and *what will ye do in the end thereof?* What a state of misery and despair would they be driven to, when their country should be conquered, and themselves captives in Babylon? *Note*; An end will come of the longest life of prosperous wickedness; and it is an awful consideration, what sinners will then do when they shall fall into the hands of the living God.

C H A P. VI.

*Ver. 1. O ye children of Benjamin*] Jeremiah continues to inveigh against the disorders of the Jews; he addresses himself to the tribe of Benjamin, to prepare to defend themselves and their city against the Chaldeans; and for that purpose to flee out of the city, and erect their standards in Tekoa, and Beth-haccerem. The Benjamites were always remarkable for their skill and address in war. Jerusalem belonged to this tribe, as well as to that of Judah. Tekoa was a village about twelve miles from Jerusalem; and Beth-haccerem was a village between Tekoa and Jerusalem. It was built upon a mountain situate in the way which led to Jerusalem from Chaldea.

*Ver. 2. I have likened the daughter of Zion*] There seems to be nothing in the simile in this verse, that can at all suit with the continuation of it in the third; and therefore I cannot but approve the interpretation which Houbigant and several others give; *I have likened the daughter of Zion to pleasant pasture, whither the shepherds with the flocks come to feed,* that is to say, "the Chaldeans with their army, who were to feed upon and devour Jerusalem." Houbigant reads the latter part of the next verse, *They have pitched their tents near it, and they feed round it, every one in his place.*

*Ver.*

let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.

5 Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces.

6 ¶ For thus hath the LORD of Hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this *is* the city to be visited; the *is* wholly oppression in the midst of her.

7 As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually *is* grief and wounds.

8 Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

9 ¶ Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thine hand as a grape gatherer into the baskets.

10 To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear *is* uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.

11 Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in; I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the

aged with *him that is* full of days.

12 And their houses shall be turned unto others, *with their* fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD.

13 For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one *is* given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

14 They have healed also the hurt *of the daughter* of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace.

15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time *that* I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*.

17 Also I set watchmen over you, *saying*, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

18 ¶ Therefore hear, ye nations, and know O congregation, what *is* among them.

19 Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, *even the* fruit of their

*Ver. 4. Woe unto us, &c.]* This is the complaint of the enemy, that they are retarded from their intended expedition by the approach of the night. In the next verse they determine to go up, though it *be by night*; whereby the great eagerness of the Chaldeans to undertake the siege, from their confidence of success, is signified.

*Ver. 6. Cast a mount]* The margin of our Bibles reads, *Pour out the engine of shot.* The original word *שֶׁלֶלֶב* *solelab*, signifies a warlike engine used in sieges for casting stones or missile weapons. See Pilkington's Remarks, and Calmet's Dissertation, *Sur la Milice des anciens Hebreux.*

*Ver. 8. Lest my soul depart from thee]* That is to say, "Lest my affections be utterly alienated from thee, so that I cast off all bowels of compassion towards thee, and give thee "up to ruin and desolation." Houbigant renders it, *Lest my soul be alienated, &c.* See Pl. lxxxii. 12, 13. and chap. li. 9.

*Ver. 9. They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine]* As much as to say, "Come, ye Chaldeans, into "my vineyard; make the vintage; gather even to the "very last grapes." The people of the Lord are very frequently represented under the figure of a vine, and their enemies as vintagers, or gatherers of the grapes.

*Ver. 11. Therefore, &c.]* Houbigant is of opinion, that these words cannot with any propriety be applied to the prophet; but that they are a continuation of the discourse from ver. 9. Accordingly he renders them, *Therefore, I will fulfil my fury, I am weary with bearing these things, I will pour out my anger, &c.*

*Ver. 14. They have healed also the hurt, &c.]* *But they apply only a slight medicine to the wounds of the daughter of my people; saying, Peace, peace, when there shall be no peace.* See chap. viii. 11. Houbigant renders the latter part of the next verse, *Therefore they shall fall, when I bring their ruin upon them; They shall entirely fall, when I visit them, saith the Lord.*

*Ver. 16. Stand ye in the ways.]* "Imitate the traveller, "when at a loss which way to direct his steps; inquire "in what way the patriarchs of old walked: imitate their "practices, wherein you will find true comfort and satisfaction." See Lowth and Calmet.

*Ver. 17. Also I set watchmen over you]* "I have given "you prophets, *as watchmen* or centinels, to advertise "you of the approach of the enemy, that you may obey "their voice, and prevent the evils which they threaten.

thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.

20 To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt-offerings *are* not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.

21 Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish.

22 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth.

23 They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they *are* cruel, and have no mercy; their

voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion.

24 We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, *and* pain, as of a woman in travail.

25 Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy *and* fear *is* on every side.

26 ¶ O daughter of my people, gird *thee* with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, *as for* an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.

27 I have set thee *for* a tower *and* a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.

“ But all this has answered no end with you.” See Isai. lvi. 10.

*Ver. 18. Therefore hear, ye nations*] “ You, Chaldeans, and all the various people who compose the army coming against Jerusalem; nay, let all the world (ver. 19.) be witnesses of the resolutions which I have taken against my people, in just vengeance for their sins.”

*Ver. 20. To what purpose, &c.*] Sheba was part of Arabia Felix, and famous for its incense and perfumes. Respecting the *sweet cane*, see Isai. xliii. 24. The prophet here reproves the hypocrisy of the Jews, who endeavoured to cover their inward corruption by the external appearances of religion:—which the prophets often declare to be of no value, when they do not proceed from a devout mind;—and thereby paved the way for the abolition of the external ceremonies of the Mosaic Dispensation, and for the practice of that spiritual worship recommended by the Gospel. See chap. v. 2. vii. 2, &c. and Isai. i. 11.

*Ver. 22. Behold, a people, &c.*] The Chaldeans are here again described as in chap. v. 15, &c. a distant nation, violent, cruel, armed with bows and spears, and well mounted: Instead of *sides of the earth*, we may read, the *coasts, ends, or extremities*.

*Ver. 26. Gird thee with sackcloth*] As the wearing of sackcloth girt round the body next the flesh (see 2 Kings, vi. 30.) is often mentioned in Scripture as usual in times of mourning and lamentation, and appears, according to our notions, a very harsh kind of discipline, it may not be amiss to take notice what kind of sackcloth is meant. Mr. Harmer cites Sir John Chardin's manuscript, to shew that the sacks used by travellers in the East for carrying their necessaries with them, were made of coarse wool, guarded with leather; and then proceeds to infer with great probability, that “ if the sacks were woollen, the sackcloth, with which the Eastern people were wont to clothe themselves at particular times, means coarse woollen cloth, such as they made sacks of, and neither hair-cloth, nor rough harsh cloth of hemp, as we may have

“ been ready to imagine; for it is the same Hebrew word “ *שַׂק*, *sak*, which signifies *sack*, that is here rendered *sackcloth*. “ And as the people of very remote antiquity commonly “ wore no linen, there was not that affectation in what they “ put on in times of humiliation, as we in the West may “ perhaps have apprehended. They only put on very “ coarse mean woollen garments, instead of those that “ were finer, but of the same general nature.” Harmer's Observ. ch. v. Obs. iv.—Sitting or lying down in ashes was another custom observed on the like occasions. See Esth. iv. 3. Job. ii. 8. xlii. 6. Isai. lviii. 5. Jonah, iii. 6. &c. &c.

*As for an only son*] A proverbial expression among the Hebrews, to denote the greatest grief. See Amos, viii. 10. Zech. xii. 10.

*Ver. 27—30. I have set thee for a tower, &c.*] The prophet in these verses evidently takes his ideas from metals, and the trial of them; and the verbs in the latter clause of this verse, referring to such trial, manifestly require something corresponding in the preceding part. But what have a *tower* and a *fortress* to do with the trying of metals? In this view the reader will agree with me, that the passage is rendered much more properly in some of the versions, and indeed more agreeably to the Hebrew, *I have given or established thee, as a strong prover or trier of metals among my people; that thou mightest know, &c.* The French version is nearly the same, *I have established thee Comme un robuste fondeur des métaux, au milieu de ce peuple, pour sonder leur voie, &c.* They are *brass and iron*, ver. 28, means, “ They “ have basely degenerated. It appears, upon trial, that “ they have nothing in them of the purity of silver or “ gold; but their impudence resembles brass, and their “ obstinacy iron.” *They are all corrupters*; should be rendered, *They are all corrupted, or degenerated*, ver. 29. *The bellows are burned, &c.* that is to say, “ All methods to “ purify and amend them are ineffectual.” *Lead* was made use of in refining metals before the application of *quick-silver*. Houbigant renders the latter part of this verse,

*The*

28 They *are* all grievous revolters, walking with flanders; *they are* bras and iron; *they are* all corrupters.

29 The bellows are burned, the lead is con-

fumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away.

30 Reprobate silver shall *men* call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.

*The founder heapeth up fire in vain: the drops of iniquity is not purged away. Reprobate or rejected silver shall men call them, ver. 30. means, that they are good for nothing but to be rejected for ever, and thrown into the flames. "As base money is refused by every one, because it cannot bear the touch-stone; so shall these hypocrites and evil-doers be rejected both by God and man."*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. An alarm spread of the approaching foe coming from the north, and spreading destruction before him. The trumpet is blown in Tekoa, the beacon lighted in Beth-haccerem, as a signal for their flight, if they hoped to escape, Jerusalem being ready to be besieged.

2. Their weakness, and the formidable power of their foes, are described. The daughter of Zion is as helpless, and unable to make resistance, as *a comely and delicate woman*, or, as others read it, *a pleasant pasture*; in correspondence with the following similitude, where their invaders are compared to shepherds with their flocks, who would pitch their tents there, and eat up the land, and make it bare, as easily as the ox licks up the grass of the field. *Note*: To have been brought up delicately, makes every hardship more acutely felt.

3. In pursuance of God's commission, their enemies hasten to the attack. *Prepare ye war against her*, and press the siege; *hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem*, to batter the walls; and, as soon as the breach is practicable, make the assault. With mutual encouragements, they quicken each other boldly to storm the place; arise, *and let us go up at noon*; and, as if some delay had prevented their design from being immediately executed, they regret that the shadows of the evening are advancing, yet resolve to carry their point, and are confident of success; the time of Jerusalem's visitation being come, they are too impatient to wait for the morning, and resolve that night to attempt the breach. *Note*: (1.) When God's day of visitation is come, the sinner can be no longer safe. (2.) If they were so eager to storm the city and seize the wealth of Jerusalem, shall we shew less zeal and earnestness to enter the kingdom of heaven and obtain the unsearchable riches of glory? (3.) Nothing encourages the heart so much as confidence of success. And thus it is, in our spiritual warfare, that faith enables us to overcome. *Post sunt, quia posse videntur*.\*

4. The cause of all these judgments is their sins. Jerusalem was become a sink of wickedness: it flowed incessantly and abundantly as the waters of a fountain; and all ranks and degrees of men were tainted: particularly the whole city was a scene of oppression, where, like fishes in the sea, the great preyed upon the little; *violence and spoil is heard in every corner*, and *grief and wounds*, the blood and the cries of the oppressed, are continually before God, calling

for vengeance. *Note*: There is a day when the wrongs of the oppressed will be examined and avenged.

5. A fair admonition is once more given, if they have yet ears to hear. *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem*: at last attend to understand and obey the calls to repentance, *lest my soul depart from thee, or be violently plucked away from thee*; his favour utterly departing from them: and his love to them turned into abhorrence; *lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited*. *Note*: (1.) God is unwilling to give up the sinner; and therefore he is patient, and pleads long with him, and late, to return. (2.) When all his offers of mercy are obstinately rejected, at last God will depart, and leave the sinner to his ruin; and then woe, woe unto him.

2dly, Farther iniquities are here discovered, and farther judgments denounced.

1. Their transgressions were multiplied.

[1.] They were deaf to all the warnings of the prophets. *To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? intimating the universal disregard paid to his message. Their ear is uncircumcised*. At first they would not hearken, and now they are left to the hardness of their hearts, *and they cannot hearken*. Nay, they counted God's word, which rebuked their sins, *a reproach* to them; and treated it, and those who delivered it, with insult and contempt. *They have no delight in it*; but the very contrary, a loathing and aversion to it. *Note*: (1.) The fidelity of God's ministers, in rebuking men's sins, is often construed into personal abuse. (2.) We are not to wonder that the word of the Gospel is looked upon as a reproach; it was so from the beginning. (3.) They who have no delight in the Bible, have no name in the book of life.

[2.] They were slaves to the love of money. High and low, rich and poor, priest and prophet, all were given to covetousness, and cared not by what falsehoods or means they enriched themselves, so they could but secure the mammon of unrighteousness. *Note*: Nothing more fatally hardens the heart against God's word, than this rooted attachment to gain.

[3.] The prophets and priests, who by profession and office should have endeavoured to stop the torrent of ungodliness, contributed to make the disease more desperate and incurable by their lying visions, false glosses, and smooth discourses, suited to lull the sinner's conscience into a fatal security, crying, *Peace, peace, when there is no peace*. *Note*: There is no surer mark of a false prophet than this, that he avoids those alarming expressions of God's word which are suited to startle the sinner; that he is solicitous to soften what are counted harsh sayings; that it is his study not to offend, and his labour to lull those to their rest, who may have been made uneasy by more faithful advocates for the truth.

[4.] They were shameless in their abominations. The preachers of lies refused to blush, when never so clearly detected in their false doctrines and flattering divinations; and the people, alike hardened, were neither ashamed of their sins, nor afraid of the threatened punishments. *Note*: Those faces which will not blush at rebuke, shall soon

be

\* They can conquer who believe they can.

## C H A P. VII.

*Jeremiah is sent to call for true repentance, to prevent the Jews' captivity: he rejecteth their vain confidence, by the example of Shiloh: he threateneth them for their idolatry: he rejecteth the sacrifices of the disobedient: he exhorteth to mourn for their abominations in Tophet, and declares the judgements for the same.*

[Before Christ 600.]

**T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2 Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD.

3 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.

be pale as flames, when the terrors of God shall seize them.

[5.] The kindest admonitions of God had no influence on them: he would have gathered them, but they would not. Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see; consider your path, and whither it will lead you, to heaven or to hell; and ask for the old paths; consult your Bibles, inquire the way wherein the holy patriarchs walked: Where is the good way, the good old way of faith and holiness, which was revealed in the first promise, and which all God's saints have trod from the beginning? and ye shall find rest for your souls, from all your fears; but they said, We will not walk therein, as if determined to rush on their destruction. Every method had God taken to deter and divert them from so fatal a resolution. I set watchmen over you, faithful ministers of the sanctuary, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet, breathing the voice of peace and mercy, or spreading the tremendous alarm of the guilt and punishment of sin. But they said, We will not hearken; refusing every method that God had taken to save them, and faithless, and fearless of his judgments, persisting in their impenitence. Note; (1.) The importance of that eternity which depends thereon, should engage us to a frequent and serious consideration of our ways, what we are doing, and whither we are going. (2.) The paths of life and truth are easily found of those who are at pains to inquire after them. (3.) The good way to heaven is Christ, his infinite merit and divine grace; and he is the old way; for from the beginning the Gospel was preached, and the saints of old were saved, even as we. (4.) They who are found in this way will obtain rest to their souls, peace with God, internal consolation, and comfortable confidence of arriving safe at their journey's end in heaven. (5.) God's faithful ministers must lead men in this way, and cry aloud to invite sinners to walk in it. (6.) They who will not be persuaded by God's word, must be left to their own delusions; and miserable, eternally miserable, will be the end of those men.

2. The terrible punishment of the Jewish people is foretold. Because they are thus obstinate and hardened, the prophet declares, *I am full of the fury of the Lord*; the revelation made to him of the wrath ready to be revealed, was so awful, that it filled his heart with terrible apprehensions for them; *I am weary with holding in*; as if unwilling to be the messenger of evil, he had refrained, till, like a fire within him, it forced a passage, and he was constrained to speak. And fearful, indeed, are the de-

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vastations threatened; *I will pour it out upon the little children playing in the streets, upon the assembly of young men associated for mirth and pleasure, husband and wife shall be taken captives, and the most decrepit with age find no reverence or pity.* Their houses are given to their enemies, with their wives and fields: upon the whole land the hand of God's vengeance is stretched out. Their lying prophets shall then meet their doom, and fall among them that fall, in spite of all their vain confidence; at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. Thus shall their enemies plunder and destroy them; and, as if solicitous to leave none to escape, they shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine, as the poor after the vintage picked off every berry which was left. Turn back thine hand as a grape-gatherer into the baskets, till all the spoil is collected, and every Israelite led captive. Note; It is the most displeasing part of our office to be the messengers of evil; but it is absolutely necessary that by the terrors of the Lord we should persuade men: and, however tremendous the subject, they who hear, ought not to be displeased with the servants who barely report what they have received of the Lord.

3dly, We have,

1. God's appeal to the whole world for the equity of his procedure. When tidings of what was done among them, judgments so terrible and strange, were reported, it might astonish them that God should thus deal with his once so favoured people; but the wonder will cease when their provocations are known. Their sufferings are the necessary fruit of their thoughts; evil, and only evil, and that continually; and the consequence of their wicked ways, as disobedient against all the warnings of God's prophets, and rebellious against all the restraints of his law. Note; If men will not be ruled by God's word, they will justly be ruined by his wrath.

2. The vanity of their pretended services. Their incense and perfumes, their offerings and sacrifices, however rich, expensive, and numerous, when brought with a hypocritical heart, as a means of purchasing God's favour, with the hopes of expiating unrepented sins, or to obtain a licence to abide in them; so far were they from being pleasing and acceptable, that they were his detestation and abhorrence.

3. The destruction that God would bring upon them. Stumbling-blocks should be set in their ways, their false prophets permitted to delude them, or the Chaldeans, by whom they should be dashed in pieces, both father and son;

F

for

5 For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour;

6 If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt:

7 Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

8 ¶ Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit.

9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;

10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers, in your eyes? behold, even I have seen *it*, saith the LORD.

12 But go ye now unto my place which *was* in Shiloh, where I set my name at the

for sinners together must suffer together; *the neighbour and his friend*; for those who have walked in evil fellowship, will be involved in the same calamity. From the north, a far distant country, the mighty enemies come, armed with bow and spear; fierce and cruel, they shew no mercy; their voice terrible as the roaring of the sea; their cavalry swift and strong; advancing in battle array *against thee, O daughter of Zion*.

4. Terrible consternation will seize the Jewish people at their approach. Frightened at the very report, like a woman with child, who falls into travailing pangs, anguish will seize them, their hearts fail them, and their hands be feeble and incapable of resistance. In terror they shut themselves up within their city, not daring to stir, to face the foe, or carry on their husbandry, or attempt to travel, *for the sword of the enemy, or because the enemy hath a sword ready drawn to slay; and fear is on every side*, no place being safe. *Note*; (1.) The sinner's terrors will seize him suddenly and severely, as the pains of a travailing woman. (2.) When God sends his panic into the heart, the mighty are feeble, and the brave turn cowards.

5. The prophet calls them to lamentation and bitter mourning, to lie in sackcloth and ashes, as one under the most afflicting anguish for the loss of an only son; and this either as a token of repentance for their sin, or as expressive of their desperate sorrows under their sudden desolations. *Note*; How much wiser is it to prevent the judgment by speedy humiliation, than by impenitence provoke the scourge, when our anguish will come too late to profit us?

6. God appoints the prophet to inspect their ways, and a sad report he makes of them. *I have set thee for a tower, to observe them; or a trier, to examine them; and for a fortress among my people*, that, as safe in the divine protection, he might not fear their threatenings; *that thou mayest know and try their way*, into which the more he searched, the more would God's judgments appear righteous. And what is the consequence of this inquisition? *They are all grievous revolters, or revolters of revolters*, the most contumacious and stubborn transgressors: *walking with slanders*; playing the hypocrite with God, or incessantly backbiting one another. *They are brass and iron*; base and vile as these metals, having brazen fronts which cannot blush, and hearts steeled that are impenetrably hardened. *They*

*are all corrupters*; as those who adulterate metals, so they corrupt the doctrines of truth; or, in Satan's stead, turn tempters to each other. *The bellows are burned*; either the judgments which they suffered had no effect on them; or the true prophets, who prophesied till they were hoarse with crying, could avail nothing; or the false prophets, who flattered them, are now consumed with them. *The lead is consumed of the fire*, which was used in refining silver, but here was in vain: or, *out of the fire it is perfect lead*; such are the people, without any thing precious or valuable in them, notwithstanding the furnace of affliction through which they had gone. *The founder melteth in vain*; all the prophet's labours were fruitless, and God's dispensations without effect: *for the wicked are not plucked away* from their former abominations, but persist in them. *Reprobate silver shall men call them*; mere dross, *because the Lord hath rejected them*, from being his people, and given them up for a prey to their enemies. *Note*; God tries every method with sinners, by calls of grace, and corrections of Providence; and if, after all, they continue reprobate silver, their eternal ruin will lie at their own door.

#### CHAP. VII.

*Ver. 1, 2. The word that came to Jeremiah*] We have here a new discourse, which reaches to the 13th chapter, wherein the prophet declaims against the vices of Judah and Jerusalem, particularly their hypocrisy and false confidence in their religious principles; delivering also some threats against Edom, Moab, Ammon, and the people of Arabia: see chap. ix. 26. Jeremiah pronounced this discourse at the east gate of the temple, which led directly to it, before all the people who entered there. See Calmet.

*Ver. 4. The temple of the Lord are these*] These gates, in which Jeremiah was commanded to stand: so in the Gospel our Saviour says, *See you all these things?* pointing to the temple, of which one stone was not to be left upon another. The threefold repetition of *the temple of the Lord*, expresses great vehemence, and an extreme presumption in these people. The prophet in apostrophizing Judæa, chap. xxii. 29. makes use of a like threefold repetition.

*Ver. 10. We are delivered to do*] *We are delivered, though we have done, &c.* The old version of 1611 renders it, *We have been delivered, though we have done, &c.*

*Ver. 12. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh*] Shiloh

first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.

13 And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not;

14 Therefore will I do unto *this* house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

15 And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, *even* the whole seed of Ephraim.

16 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.

17 ¶ Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

18 The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead *their* dough, to make cakes to the queen of

heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

19 Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: *do they* not *provoke* themselves to the confusion of their own faces.

20 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.

21 ¶ Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.

22 For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices:

23 But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

Shiloh was the place where, upon the first coming of the Israelites into Canaan, the tabernacle, in which was the ark of God's presence, was set up, by divine appointment no doubt; and there it continued for a long space of time until the days of Samuel. It was during this residence, that the Israelites received that signal defeat from the Philistines, when the ark of God was taken, as related 1 Sam. iv. 10, 11. the pathetic description of which disaster made by the Psalmist, Ps. lxxviii. 60-64. has caused it to be generally believed, that an allusion to it was likewise designed upon this occasion. But a due consideration of the context will, I think, lead us rather to conclude in favour of a more recent event, the vestiges of which were still fresh to be seen. Shiloh was in the tribe of Ephraim; and this place, once so favoured and sanctified by God's particular residence, had shared the fate of the rest of the kingdom of Israel, and was become a scene of misery and ruin. This they might literally "go and see" at present; and this, says God, "have I done because of the wickedness of my people Israel." In which words Israel, meaning the ten tribes, is acknowledged to have been God's people no less than Judah; and Shiloh, it is observed, had once enjoyed the same privileges which now belonged to the temple at Jerusalem. But as God spared not Shiloh, but made it the victim of his wrath; so he says he would do to Jerusalem and her temple; and would cast off Judah for their wickedness from being his people, in like manner as he had already cast off their brethren, whom he distinguishes by the name of the children of Ephraim.

Ver. 13. *Rising up early, &c.*] See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15.

The phrase means, "making all possible haste, and using every endeavour, continually and carefully preventing you with my remonstrances: I employed, with all possible attention, severity, and softness, promises and threats; but all to no purpose."

Ver. 15. *Even the whole seed of Ephraim*] The ten tribes, who were sent into captivity in the reign of Hezekiah, the great-grandfather of Josiah, under whom Jeremiah prophesied.

Ver. 16. *Therefore, pray not thou, &c.*] This is not said to Jeremiah, because God would not have him affected with love for his country; but to assure him, that if he prayed it would be in vain, as he had determined to punish the incorrigible sins of the Jews. These expressions, however, admirably mark out the efficacy of the prayers of believers for sinners. See Ezek. xxxii. 30. and Houbigant.

Ver. 18. *To the queen of heaven*] *The queen of heaven* was the moon; the same as *Astarte* or *Ashtaroth*. The prophet here describes the whole family as busied in preparing their sacrifices and superstitious rites to this idol. Houbigant renders the words *other gods*, very properly, by *strange gods*; and ver. 19. *Do they aggrrieve me, saith the Lord, and not themselves* [rather], *to the confusion of their own faces?*

Ver. 21-23. *Put your burnt-offerings, &c.*] Houbigant renders this, *Put together your burnt-offerings with your peace-offerings; and eat their flesh*. The meaning is, "Eat your sacrifices yourselves, your burnt-offerings and your peace-offerings. I am equally regardless of one and the other. I have nothing to do with them; nor can ever accept offerings from people of so superstitious and so



24 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels *and* in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

25 Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending *them* :

26 Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.

27 Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee.

28 But thou shalt say unto them, *This is* a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

29 ¶ Cut off thine hair, *O Jerusalem*, and cast *it* away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

30 For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

31 And they have built the high places of Tophet, which *is* in The valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters

“rebellious a disposition. To be acceptable to me, they must be presented with an humble and obedient heart.” This leads plainly to the interpretation of the next verses, which are by no means to be taken separately, as if God had not required burnt-offerings at all; but, that he did not insist so much upon sacrifice, as upon obedience to the commands of the moral law; or at least that the former derived all their efficacy from the latter. Others however, and among these Grotius, lay the emphasis upon the words, *in the day*; that is to say, “At the time when I first brought you out of Egypt; when the laws respecting sacrifices were not delivered, though such as respected obedience were then and ever in full force.” Sacrifices, which were but *parts* of duty, are here opposed to *intire* and *universal* obedience. Now, the thing which God required, and chiefly insisted upon, was, *universal* righteousness, and not partial obedience, which is next to no obedience, because not performed upon a true principle of obedience. God does not deny that he had required *sacrifices*: but he had *primarily* and *principally* required *obedience*, which included *sacrifices*, and all other instances of duty as well as that: and he would not accept of such lame service as those sacrifices amounted to; for that was paying him *part* only, in lieu of the *whole*. Or we may say, that sacrifices, the *out-work*, are here opposed to *obeying God's voice*: that is to say, the shadow is opposed to the substance, apparent duty to real, hypocrisy and empty shew to sincerity and truth. Now the thing which God required and insisted upon, was obedience to his voice in every thing; and he laid no stress upon sacrifices, any further than as considered as parts of true obedience. Sacrifices, separate from true holiness, or from a sincere love of God, were not the service which God required; for hypocritical services are no services, but abominations in his sight: he expected, he demanded religious devout sacrifices; while his people brought him only outside compliments to flatter him, empty formalities to affront and dishonour him. These were not the things which God *spoke of*, or *commanded*: the sacrifices that he *spoke of*, were pure sacrifices, to be offered up with a clean and upright heart.

Those he required, and those only he would accept of, as real duty and service. The mere *opus operatum*, or outward work of offering up sacrifices, from a corrupt heart, was no sacrificing to God, any more than the *fasting for strife and debate*, Zech. vii. 5. Isai. lviii. 4—7. was a fasting to God. Such sacrifices God detested, as being a semblance only of duty, and not the duty required; a corruption and profanation of a holy rite, rather than a just and proper conformity to it. Sacrifices so profaned, carried more of human corruption than of divine institution in them, being a kind of mock worship which man had contrived, and not the true worship which God had enjoined. See Waterland's Script. Vind. part iii. p. 68. and Amos, v. 25.

Ver. 24. *And went backward, &c.] And they turned from me, and not towards me, (ver. 25.). Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt, unto this day. And I sent unto them, &c.*

Ver. 27. *Therefore, &c.] And when thou shalt speak all these things unto them, they will not hearken unto thee.*

Ver. 29. *Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem]* See Job, i. 20. Isai. xv. 2. and Ezek. xxvii. 31. Jerusalem is here addressed as a woman under extreme misery, and exhorted to take upon her the habit and disposition of a mourner, and to bewail the calamities which were fallen upon her. Instead of, *Take up a lamentation on high places*, some read, *for the high places*; see ver 31, 32. *To cut off the hair* was a mark of extreme grief: the custom was usual among the Pagans also. Achilles, as well as his soldiers, cut off their hair at the funeral of Patroclus. Mr. Pope is of opinion, that this custom of cutting off the hair was not only in token of sorrow, but perhaps had a concealed meaning,—that as the hair was cut from the head, and was never more to be joined to it; so was the dead for ever cut off from the living, never more to return. See his note on Il. xxiii. ver. 164. and Peters on Job, p. 315. The last words of the verse may be rendered, *A most provoking generation; or a generation which hath much angered him.*

Ver. 31. *The high places of Tophet]* The valley of Hinnom, or of the son of Hinnom, was near Jerusalem, and was the scene



in the fire; which I commanded *them* not, neither came it into my heart.

32 ¶ Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter: for they shall

bury in Tophet, till there be no place.

33 And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray *them* away.

34 Then will I cause to cease from the

scene of those horrid sacrifices which the Israelites, in imitation of their idolatrous neighbours, made of their children to Moloch. Tophet was the particular spot in the valley where the fires were made, into which the poor innocent victims were thrown; and is supposed to have derived its name from the drums and tabrets, which were beaten in order to drown the childrens' cries. The high places, בְּנוֹת *bamoth*, were in all probability artificial mounts, or *tumuli*, thrown up about the place for the purpose of performing some of the rites with which these sacrifices were accompanied; or from which the persons assembled might command a view of the dreadful spectacle.

Ver. 32. *But The valley of slaughter*] The reason of this name is given in the words immediately following; *for they shall bury in Tophet till there be no place*:—"Till it is intirely filled, and there is no vacant space left." Houbigant and the Vulgate render the last clause, *And they shall bury in Tophet, because there shall be no place*; "Every other place shall be full of carnage, and Tophet shall become the slaughtering-place of Jerusalem. There those dead bodies shall be cast out, to which they shall not deign to grant sepulture. The time shall come when there shall be so great a slaughter in Jerusalem, that, the graves being insufficient to bury the dead, they shall be forced to throw them into Tophet, and leave them without interment." This prediction received its last and most perfect accomplishment in the war of Nebuchadnezzar against the Jews, and that of the Romans against the same people. Josephus informs us, that in this latter war an infinite number of dead bodies were thrown over the walls, and left in the vallies round the city; infomuch that Titus himself, beholding this spectacle, could not help lifting up his hands to heaven, and calling God to witness that he had no part in these inhuman practices. Josiah began to pollute Tophet, by casting filth into it, and scattering there the dust and ashes of the idols which he had broken to pieces and burned. See 2 Kings, xxiii. 10. Compare this with chap. xix. where Jeremiah repeats the same threatenings with more latitude and force; declaring that Tophet shall become the lay-stall of Jerusalem, and that Jerusalem herself shall be reduced to the condition of Tophet; that is to say, polluted and filled with dead bodies. In chap. xxxi. 40. he calls it, *The valley of the dead bodies*. See Calmet.

Ver. 34. *Then will I cause to cease, &c.*] "There shall be no more marriages; no more shall the voice of mirth and rejoicing be heard; or the sound of musical instruments, which usually attends this sort of festivals." See Pindar's third Pythian Ode, line 30.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This chapter begins a new sermon and prophesy, designed, as the former, to lead the people to repentance.

1. Directions are given to the prophet what to speak, and where to deliver his message. He must proclaim the word of the Lord, without adding thereto, or diminishing therefrom; and stand in the gate of the house of the Lord, the most frequented place, where those who came up to worship might hear; probably at one of the three great festivals, when the concourse was greatest. *Note*: (1.) A large auditory is desirable, where the words of truth are dispensed. (2.) We must not be afraid of being censured for extravagant zeal: when in general the ministers of the sanctuary are careless, we cannot be faithful without being singular.

2. The general contents of his discourse are, an exhortation to repentance, with a gracious promise annexed. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, at whose command, and by whose authority, he speaks, *the God of Israel*, whom they, as his people, are peculiarly bound to obey; *Amend your ways, and your doings*; make a thorough change in them, for they are at present utterly perverse; *and I will cause you to dwell in this place*; to enjoy their land, and the temple service, and not remove into captivity, as would infallibly be the case if they continued impenitent.

3. He specifies the particulars, which immediately, heartily, and thoroughly, must be amended; and they are summed up in two points, as being their grand evils, oppression and idolatry. They must be just; their magistrates impartial; no allowed dishonesty permitted in their dealings; the fatherless and widows must not be injured, nor innocent blood any more defile the land; and all false gods must be utterly rejected and abhorred: then God will make their abode in the good land given to their fathers both safe and lasting. *Note*: God only saith to the sinner; Do thyself no harm: all that he requires of us is purely for our own good and happiness.

4. He rebukes their vain confidence, and urges them no longer to trust in their formal duties and external privileges. The false prophets magnified the outward service of the temple, as if in this all godliness consisted; and they readily embraced a religion which rested in mere externals of worship, and required no inward mortification of sin. *The temple of the Lord* was ever in their mouths; their boast and confidence; and while thrice a-year they attended there, they thought they fulfilled their duty. But alas! these were *lying words*, a delusive hope, which could not profit them, while they looked no further than the ritual service, and exercised no faith in the Messiah, which alone gave it any efficacy, and especially while all their sins continued unrepented of, and indulged. *Will ye steal? or, ye do steal*. He expostulates on their absurdity, and charges them with abominations. They continued in *murder*, theft, perjury, *adultery*, idolatry; and yet dared appear before God in the temple, as if their sacrifices could atone for their crimes; and impudently affected still to pass for

true:

cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and

the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

true servants and worshippers of God; saying in their words, or, which spoke as loud, in their actions, *we are delivered to do all these abominations*; either they thought themselves at liberty to sin, after they had appeared at the temple with their sacrifices; or, that having been delivered so long, they might go on still with impunity in their iniquities. This with deepest indignation God beholds, and upbraids them with. *Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?* as robbers take refuge in their den, so did they in the temple, thinking to cover their enormities with the cloak of ceremonies and sacrifices; but vain before God were these wretched coverings. *Behold, I have seen it, saith the Lord, their hypocrisy great as their impiety.* *Note;* (1.) Many pride themselves in a *form of godliness*, who are strangers to the *power* of it; and, while they boast of the *church*, and their attendance thrice in a year at the Lord's table, are in fact the farthest from the kingdom of God. (2.) To plead the sacrifice of Christ for sin, as a licence to continue in it, is the most detestable abuse of Gospel grace. (3.) Few dare avow what, notwithstanding, their conduct evidently declares. (4.) The guise of godliness may pass upon men, but no hypocrisy can be concealed from the heart-searching God.

5. He sets before them, for their admonition, and to shew the vanity of their hopes, the destruction of Israel, notwithstanding the tabernacle once pitched in Shiloh. Let them go thither, and read, on the ruins of this once-famed abode of God's ark, the insufficiency of that protection, when the wickedness of the worshippers, and of the priests, provoked God's wrath against them, Josh. xviii. 1. 1 Sam. iv. 4—11. Pf. lxxviii. 60—67. and such would be their doom, since such had been their sins. With like abominations they had offended God, and equally deaf to the repeated admonitions of God's prophets had they been; therefore the temple and city of Jerusalem shall become as Shiloh, a desolation, and God will cast off the whole people of Judah, as he had already done by their brethren of Israel, who were gone long since into captivity. *Note;* (1.) God's judgments on others are warnings to us to avoid their ways, if we would escape their punishment. (2.) They who follow the examples of sinners will surely suffer with them. (3.) They who are cast off from God are truly miserable, and must, as the necessary consequence, be shortly cast down into hell.

2dly, Their own prayers and services were so hypocritical and abominable, that no good could be expected from them; but the prophet still continued their advocate, and his prayers were usually more or less availing; but God will cut off from them every resource.

1. He is forbidden to pray for them. Much as the prophet had their salvation at heart, God's decree is fixed, prayer comes too late, their ruin is determined. *Note;* (1.) They who preach to sinners must pray for them; yea, though they revile and persecute. (2.) In a desperate state is that people, concerning whom God refuses to be intreated, and shuts up the mouths of his prophets.

2. God assigns the reasons for his prohibition; their impudent iniquities, and incorrigible obstinacy. Openly, in the cities of Judah, yea, in the very streets of Jerusalem, under the prophet's eye, unawed by his presence, and unaffected with his warnings, they performed their idolatrous rites, offering meat-offerings and drink-offerings to the queen of heaven, the moon, consecrated for a goddess, and to their other idols; and in this work all ages and sexes joined; so universal was the corruption spread! The very children gathered the wood, while their fathers kindled the fire, and the women kneaded the cakes, *to provoke God to anger.* See how carefully idolaters initiated betimes their children in the service of their idols; shall we be less solicitous to instruct ours in the knowledge of the living God? Could they so freely part with their bread and wine in these detestable rites; and shall not we more liberally in God's service break our bread to the hungry, and open our bottle to the thirsty?

3. He threatens them with the dire consequences of this conduct. *Do they provoke me to anger?* No: such perturbation as we feel, enters not into the Eternal Mind. Or does he receive any damage by their wickedness? No: as their goodness could not add to his self-sufficient bliss and happiness, neither can their wickedness take from it. The hurt that they do is only to themselves, bringing upon their own heads swift destruction. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place;* a deluge of wrath, such as swept away the world of the ungodly, or which fell upon devoted Sodom. The temple and city shall be utterly destroyed; both *man and beast* be consumed; and the very *trees and fruits of the ground* devoured by the fire of divine wrath. It shall *burn* with irresistible fury, *and shall not be quenched.* And herein we have an awful representation of the punishment of all the wicked in hell, *who depart accursed into everlasting fire.*

3dly, As they placed so much dependance on their sacrifices to procure their acceptance with God, God will have them know that these are insignificant and vain, while they mistook their end, and perverted their institution. *Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh;* either give over such vain oblations, and use them rather at your own tables; or add never so many or expensive offerings, and pretend never so religiously to eat them before the Lord; they are utterly unacceptable, while the love and power of sin remain unsubdued in your hearts. For,

1. Obedience, not sacrifice, is the great thing which God requires. The ten commandments were first delivered to their fathers in the wilderness; and, though sacrifices were afterwards instituted, it was not for their own sake, but in order to lead them by faith to the great Antetype, whose atonement was therein represented; exclusive of which, they were utterly useless and unacceptable. The principal part, therefore, of the Sinai covenant was, *Obey my voice;* and to this the promise was annexed, *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people;* protecting them from their enemies, and preserving them in the possession

C H A P. VIII.

*The calamities of the Jews, both alive and dead: he upbraided their foolish and shameless impenitency; he sheweth their grievous judgement, and bewaileth their desperate estate.*

[Before Christ 600.]

**A**T that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of

Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves.

2 And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have

feffion of the promised land; and as long as they thus carefully walked in all God's ways, so long it should be well with them, and prosperity continually attend them.

2. Disobedience to the moral law is their great offence, and this had been their case from their very coming out of Egypt to that day. Their fathers and they had together rejected God's law, to walk after *the imagination of their own evil heart*; and, instead of advancing in the ways of holiness and happiness, turned back into the paths of sin and misery, and this in opposition to long and repeated warnings, brought them from those divinely-appointed ministers, whom God from time to time raised up to admonish them of the evil and danger of their ways. Instead of amending, every generation grew worse, and more hardened, till the measure of their iniquities now rose to the brim; therefore the prophet is commanded to *speak all these words unto them*; those charges of their rebellion and obstinacy, and those warnings of their impending ruin. Not that these would have any effect; God foretels him, that they would not hearken, nor answer to his calls: *but*, to leave them inexcusable in their wickedness, *thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God*, which relation aggravated their disobedience; *nor receiveth correction*; they will not be taught by the word, nor reclaimed by the rod: *truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth*; they are false and faithless to God and man; nothing but lies, insincerity, and hypocrisy, are to be found among them, and therefore nothing but ruin to be expected. *Note*; We must not cease to admonish sinners, though we see no prospect of reclaiming them; we must speak, if but for a testimony against them.

4thly, Jerusalem, in the prospect of her approaching desolations, is called upon to cut off her hair, in token of deepest mourning, Job, i. 20. and on the high places, the scene of her abominations, to lift up an exceeding bitter cry, as rejected of God, devoted to wrath, and given up into the hands of her cruel enemies.

1. Her sin is exceeding sinful. They *have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord*; continued in a course of open and daring impiety: particularly their abominable idolatry, provoked him, which they had carried to such an enormous height, that in God's own house they had dared to set up their images, and rear their altars, as if they designed on purpose to defile that holy place; and their sacrifices were as horrid and inhuman as their deities were detestable. They *built the high places of Tophet*, where Moloch's hated image stood, and, deaf to the cries of nature, and the shrieks of murdered infants, their parents, lost to every feeling of natural affection, burnt their children in the fire. It is said, that this was performed by

heating the brazen idol red hot, and then the parent laid the child on his arms, while the priests beat drums to drown the horrid shrieks and cries: sacrifices which God never commanded, and such as he never thought of enjoining his worshippers. *Note*; When sin has hardened the heart, it is amazing to what a pitch of barbarity and inhumanity men may go.

2. The vengeance denounced for this is exceedingly terrible. Tophet, the scene of these abominations, shall shortly change its name for *the valley of slaughter, or of the slain*; for there shall multitudes fall by the sword, or be carried thither to be buried; multitudes so great, that graves shall be wanting for them, and the unburied corpses lie for meat to the fowls of heaven, and beasts of the earth, and not a man left to carry them away. Deserted now are the streets of Jerusalem; no voice of joy is heard, no congratulations of the bride or bridegroom, but the sound of mournful lamentations; or the land is become so desolate, that none are left to weep, and more melancholy silence reigns. *Note*; God will soon change sinful mirth into everlasting mourning: we need rejoice with trembling.

C H A P. VIII.

*Ver. 1. At that time, saith the Lord*] "The Chaldeans shall regard neither the living nor the dead. They shall put the living to death without remorse; and shall break open and defile the tombs of the dead, in hopes of finding riches deposited there. They shall cast them out of their sepulchres, and leave them upon the ground, without staying to collect them together and replace them." See Baruch, ii. 24, 25. Among the insults of the victorious soldiery toward the cities of the enemy, Horace does not omit that of violating the tombs, as one of the most cruel and detestable:

Barbarians fell shall wanton with success,  
Scatter her city's flaming ruins wide,  
Or through her streets in vengeful triumph ride;  
And her great founder's hallow'd ashes spurn,  
That slept uninjur'd in their sacred urn.

EPODE XVI. FRANCIS.

We learn from Josephus (Ant. lib. vii. cap. ult.) that king Solomon laid up vast treasures in his father's sepulchre, which remained untouched till the pontificate of Hyrcanus, who on a public emergency opened one of the cells, and took out at once three thousand talents of silver. And afterwards Herod the Great opened another cell, out of which he also took considerable wealth. Whether the Chaldeans had any notion of this particular deposit, or whether they were tempted by a prevailing custom of burying valuable things together with the bodies of the deceased, does not appear.

*Ver.*

served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have fought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.

3 And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of Hosts.

4 ¶ Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?

5 Why *then* is this people of Jerusalem flidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

6 I hearkened and heard, *but* they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

7 Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.

8 How do ye say, *We are wise*, and the law of the LORD *is* with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he *it*; the pen of the scribes *is* in vain.

9 The wise *men* are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the

word of the LORD; and what wisdom *is* in them?

10 Therefore will I give their wives unto others, *and* their fields to them that shall inherit *them*: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely.

11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace.

12 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

13 ¶ I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: *there shall be* no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig-tree, and the leaf shall fade; and *the things that* I have given them shall pass away from them.

14 Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the fenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.

15 We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!

16 The snorting of his horses was heard

Ver. 2. *And they shall spread them*] *And they shall leave them exposed, &c.*

Ver. 3. *Family*] *Generation.*

Ver. 4. *Shall he turn away*] *Or he that turneth away, shall he not return?* Houbigant renders it, *Shall they who are alienated never return?* The similitude, says he, is taken from a man who falls by neglect, but afterward raises himself; and from one who departs from another in passion, but afterwards is reconciled; which was not the case with the Jews who fell by idolatry, but did not arise; who departed from their God, but returned not to him. See the next verses.

Ver. 7. *Yea, the stork in the heaven*] "These birds know "by natural instinct the seasons when to return to the "places of their former abode; whereas this people never "think of returning to their former and only true God." The sacred writers often send men to the brute creation for instruction, in order to upbraid their stupidity. See particularly Isai. i. 3. and Scheuchzer's *Physique Sacrée*, tom. vii. p. 297. for an account of these birds of passage.

Houbigant renders the last clause, *But my people know not the accustomed ways of the Lord*; see Prov. ii. 8. meaning the ways of divine providence, or the course of things whereby God governs the world.

Ver. 13. *I will surely consume them, &c.*] *I was about to gather them, saith the Lord, but there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig-tree; and the leaves themselves have faded: they have dissipated those things which I gave them.* Houb. Instead of, *And the things, &c.* we may read, *And what strength there is in them, shall pass away, &c.*

Ver. 14. *Why do we sit still?*] This seems to be spoken in the person of the people who lived in open towns and villages, exhorting one another to repair to Jerusalem, and other fortified places, to seek for refuge; whereas the prophet had before exhorted the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to flee even thence. He therefore replies, in the following part of the verse, that God had indeed put them to silence in another sense; namely, he had taken away all their strength, and left them to be destroyed by their enemies. See Isai. xlvii. 5. Lowth and Calmet.

from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.

17 For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which *will not be charmed*, and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.

18 ¶ *When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.*

19 Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that

dwell in a far country: *Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?*

20 The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

21 For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.

22 *Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

*Ver. 16. The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan]* Dan was situated at the northern extremity of Palestine, on the side whence the Chaldeans were to come against Jerusalem. See chap. iv. 15. This verse cannot but remind the learned reader of Virgil's famous description of the horse, which has nothing in it more strong and expressive than the fine words of the prophet; *the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones.*

*Ver. 17. Behold, I will send serpents]* Under the idea of beasts and venomous creatures are represented inexorable enemies: see chap. v. 6. Pf. lviii. 4, 5. and Calmet. That some persons possessed the faculty of rendering serpents harmless, is a fact too well attested by historians and travellers to admit of contradiction. But by what means this effect was produced, is not quite so clear. Pliny speaks of certain herbs, which being carried about prevented the bite of serpents. Hist. Nat. lib. xx. sect. 15. lib. 22. sect. 25. Others tell surprising, but not altogether incredible stories of the affinity and influence of musical sounds. See Bouchart De Sacr. Animal. par. II. lib. iii. cap. 6. Shaw's Travels, p. 429. and Sir John Chardin's manuscript, cited by Harmer, ch. viii. obs. 14. In this same manuscript the author remarks, that "those that know how to tame serpents by their charms, are wont commonly to break out their teeth;" and supposes this to be alluded to, Pf. lviii. 6. "Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth." But whatever were the methods commonly practised, the enemies of the Jews are here compared to such serpents as were not to be mollified nor disarmed by any of those means; "they shall bite you, saith JEHOVAH."

*Ver. 18. When I would comfort myself]* Comfort, or mirth flies from me: sorrow hangs over me, my heart is faint. Heb.

*Ver. 19. Behold, the voice, &c.]* The prophet anticipates in his imagination the captivity of his countrymen in Babylon, a far country; and represents them there as asking with a mixture of grief and astonishment, if there was no such a Being as JEHOVAH, who presided in Sion, that he so neglected his people, and suffered them to continue in such a wretched plight. Upon this complaint of theirs God justly breaks in with a question on his part; and demands why, if they acknowledged such a protector as himself, they had deserted his service, and by going over to idols, with which they had no natural connexion, had forfeited all title to his favour. The people then proceed

with their complaint in the next verse; setting forth, that, though much time had elapsed, they nevertheless seemed to be still as far from deliverance as ever.

*Ver. 20. The harvest is past]* The people, besieged in Jerusalem, afflicted themselves on account of the length of the siege. "We flattered ourselves," say they, "with a speedy deliverance; the false prophets amused us with their vain predictions: behold, the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we have no appearance of succour or deliverance." The last siege of Jerusalem continued two years; and the false prophets during all that time continued to seduce the people by their frivolous promises. See Calmet.

*Ver. 21. For the hurt, &c.]* Jeremiah here deploras the misfortunes of Jerusalem, and continues to do so in the subsequent chapter. Houbigant renders this verse, *I am wounded with the wound of the daughter of my people. I am thrown into grief; astonishment hath seized me;* and so the French, *J'en suis attristé.*

*Ver. 22. Is there no balm in Gilead?]* "Whence then comes it that the wound of my people hath not been closed? Is it my fault? Have I not sent you prophets? Have I not given you time, instructions, and means to return to your duty? Have ye wanted physic or physicians? Why then are you not cured? Doubtless it is because you would not make use of the remedies, nor consult the physicians." The ancient physicians were all surgeons, and applied the remedies themselves. The balm, resin, or turpentine of Gilead, is celebrated in Scripture: compare Gen. xxxvii. 25. Joseph was sold to Ishmaelite merchants, who came from Gilead, and carried balm and sweet spices. Jeremiah, speaking to Egypt in chap. xlvi. 11. says, *Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt.* Physicians inform us, that turpentine, and balm in general, are good to soften, assuage, warm, dissolve, cleanse, dry up, and purge. There are various sorts of turpentine, which are distinguished by their peculiar properties, and the trees which produce them; for the terebinthus or turpentine-tree, the lentisk, the larch, the cypress, the pine, the fir, the pitch-tree, and several others, alike respectively produce them. See Calmet, and Scheuchzer on the place.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, In the dreadful desolations described in the former chapter, the unburied corpses lie exposed;

## C H A P. IX.

*Jeremiah lamenteth for the manifold sins of the Jews, and for their judgment. Disobedience is the cause of their bitter calamity: he exhorteth to mourn on account of their destruction, and to trust not in themselves, but in God: he threateneth both Jews and Gentiles.*

[Before Christ 600.]

**O**H that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might

exposed; here these savage invaders suffer not the dead to enjoy quiet repose.

1. The graves and sepulchres of Judah's kings and princes shall be opened, either through covetousness to search for treasures; or to show insult even to their ashes; or as a just judgment of God, who suffered the bones of the kings, priests, prophets, and people, who had so rebelled against him, to be exposed with infamy before those luminaries of heaven which they had worshipped, loved, served, and sought: they had walked in the most abominable idolatries, and set up these for their gods, as if their favour was to be desired, and their blessing to be obtained: foolish and impious the service! and now it appeared so, when they could not afford the least help, nor so much as collect their scattered bones, spread for dung upon the face of the earth. *Note;* In the day of Judgment the sinner's loathsome carcase will be more shamefully exposed. *Isa. lvi. 24.*

2. Death, the most dreaded of human evils, now shall be courted; not that it has lost aught of its horrors, but because life is become intolerable; not from a hope of happiness in the exchange, but from despair of rest or ease below. The survivors of *this evil family* shall be so harassed and tormented in every place whither they are driven, that they shall look with envy on those who have perished by famine and the sword, and count their lot more eligible than their own. *Note;* That case is terrible indeed, when life becomes a burden, and the sinner is tempted to prefer strangling and death.

2dly, Never were people so infatuated to their ruin.

1. They persevered in their evil ways. In general, when a man falls, he seeks immediately to recover himself; and if he loses his way, he is solicitous to return into the right path; *Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?* and instead of any desire to amend, *they hold fast deceit;* obstinate against every means of conviction, they refuse to return. *Note;* Nothing is so great a deceit as sin; it promises so much enjoyment, and ever produces so much misery.

2. They disappointed (speaking after the manner of men) God's expectations from them. He patiently waited and hearkened, in case they might at last be prevailed upon to change their note, and learn the language of penitence: but not one spake aright, nor repented of his wickedness, reflecting with shame upon his conduct: but just the very reverse; they urged on their mad career in sin with such determined waywardness and fearlessness, *as the horse rusheth into the battle.* *Note;* (1.) God is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should

weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

2 Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

3 And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from

come to repentance. (2.) The first step to real penitence is serious reflection upon the evil of our past ways, *What have I done?* (3.) The daring sinner who mocks at the terrors of the Lord as chimeras, and fearless rushes into the depths of iniquity, will find them fearful realities, and that half was not told him.

3. They were more stupid and irrational than the fowls of heaven, while they made the highest pretensions to wisdom. The birds of passage by instinct know the proper season for their coming and going, and how to direct their flight; but *my people know not the judgment of the Lord;* neither how to improve the calls of mercy in God's word, nor the corrections of affliction, nor his visitations on others; and yet they say, *We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us.* How shameless their pretensions! when their whole conduct appeared so contradictory. In vain had they the law, and the pen of the scribes to write out copies or comments upon it; their expostions were false, or at least they paid no regard to them, if true. Their wise men themselves are confounded at calamities which they could neither foresee nor avert: nor can it be wondered at, when, *lo! they have rejected the word of the Lord,* sent by his prophets; and *what wisdom is in them,* when they reject the counsel of God, and refuse to be instructed. *Note;* (1.) Many enjoy plenty of means, have Bibles and ministers, and yet are never the wiser for them. (2.) Whatever pretences to wisdom they may make, who reject God's revealed word, they will be confounded in the day of judgment at their own egregious folly.

4. For their sins they shall suffer. Their sins are before charged on them, chap. vi. 13—15. *Love of filthy lucre,* most scandalous in those who are to preach and to be examples to others of deadness to the world. *Insincerity;* their professions were false, and their doctrine diabolical, tending to lull the sinner's soul into fatal security, instead of rousing him to a sense of his danger; and *daring impudence,* which knew not to blush, though convicted of their lies, and upbraided for their abominations. Therefore God's wrath is upon them; their wives shall be captive, and concubines to their enemies; their land possessed by aliens; and they, in the time of visitation, when God makes inquisition for sin, shall fall with them that fall, cast down, and utterly consumed. *Note;* (1.) Companions in sin will fall together into the pit of destruction. (2.) They who have been instrumental to deceive others to their ruin, shall receive the greater damnation.

3dly, Wicked men are plagued for their offences.

1. God threatens utterly to consume them with famine and the sword. Blasting and mildew shall strip their vines and



evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.

4 Take ye heed every one of his neighbour,

and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.

and fig-trees bare, and leave not a leaf thereon: or their enemies would thus utterly consume their fruits, and rob them of all the providential gifts which God had so richly bestowed on them in that land of plenty; and the Chaldeans with a mortal sting, as the fiery flying serpents in the wilderness, shall bite them with their envenomed fangs, and no charm be found to sooth their rage, or stop their ravages. *Note;* (1.) It is just in God to take from us the mercies that we have abused. (2.) When the worm in hell begins to gnaw the sinner's conscience, it never can be charmed to rest.

2. Their complaints and distresses are very bitter. To sit still in the country must be their ruin, where famine wasted, and which would be first over-run by the invaders; therefore they resolve to enter the defended cities, and be silent there; either hoping for protection, or rather intimating, that it were useless to complain when they despaired of redress; because their destruction was from God, who, in just punishment for their sins, which they are compelled to own, though they perished in them, had given them this gall of affliction to drink. And herein they seem rather to speak the language of indignation against God for their sufferings, than of humiliation for their sins. Their expectations of peace, with which the lying prophets had flattered them, and their own foolish hearts promised them, were now at end. Nothing but trouble and terror were before them; the very neighing of the numerous cavalry advancing from Dan made them tremble, while they beheld the cities and country wasted, and the inhabitants captives or slain. *Note;* (1.) Unhumbled sinners in sullen silence behold their ruin approach, without power to avoid it, and without a heart to deprecate the wrath which they have provoked. (2.) When God sends his terrors before him, the strongest tremble for fear. (3.) They who continue in their sins look for peace in vain; for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

3. All their confidence had failed. They buoyed themselves up with vain hopes that God, as king in Zion, would, notwithstanding all their provocations, not suffer the habitation of his holiness to be destroyed: and they expostulate with him, as if he was faithless to his promises, or his power weakened; but God replies, to their confusion, *Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images?* Their destruction was of their own seeking; they first rejected him for their God, before he forsook them as his people. Their expectations from their Egyptian allies were disappointed also; they continued to hope that they would come and force the Chaldeans to raise the siege; but *the harvest is past*, when they expected them, in April and May; *the summer is ended*, in July; and winter now approached, without the least prospect of deliverance, and *we are not saved*; so that they sunk into despair. *Note;* When the day of grace is over, nothing remains for the sinner, but a fearful looking-for of judgment.

4. The prophet bewails the miseries of his countrymen.

*When I would comfort myself against sorrow, either by meditating on God's promises, or suggesting to himself arguments for hope and patience, my heart is faint in me, overcome with the views of the impending calamities.* The cry of Zion's inhabitants rung dolefully in his ears, groaning under the miseries that they endured from the siege, or in their hard captivity. He felt his heart wounded through them, and was broken by the tender sympathy of their sufferings; black as mourners in deepest distress, and overwhelmed with astonishment at the miseries he beheld. *Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?* either intimating the incurableness of their disease, and the death-stroke given to the kingdom; or as upbraiding them with their stupidity and obstinacy in refusing to be healed by the rich mercies of God, and rejecting the prophets whom he had sent to them. *Why then is not the health of my people recovered?* It was not for want of balm, or a physician, but intirely owing to their wilful opposition to all the means and methods that God had taken for their recovery. *Note;* (1.) A good man, a faithful minister, cannot but tenderly feel and lament the miseries which he sees disobedient sinners pulling on their own heads. (2.) There is balm in Gilead, a cure for every sin-sick soul; even the blood of Jesus; he is a physician whose skill no spiritual disease, however inveterate, can baffle; and in his hands the most desperate case never miscarries, when the penitent sinner casts himself upon him.

CHAP. IX.

*Ver. 1. Ob that my head were waters!* We have here a fine instance of the pathetic, wherein Jeremiah so much excels. He sympathizes with the calamities of his people, in order to excite them to a sense of their own misfortunes, and to prevail upon them to humble themselves under the afflicting hand of the Almighty.

*Ver. 2. A lodging-place of wayfaring men!* Travellers in the East are not, nor ever were, accommodated at inns on the road, after the manner of the European nations. In some places, indeed, there are large public buildings provided for their reception, which they call *caravanferas*: but these afford merely a covering, being absolutely without furniture; and the traveller must carry his own provisions and necessaries along with him, or he will not find any. Nor are even these empty mansions always to be met with; so that if the weary traveller at night comes into a town, where there is no *caravanfera*, or *πανδοχειον*, as it is called, Luke, x. 34. he must take up his lodging in the street, unless some charitable inhabitant will be pleased to receive him into his house, as we find, Judg. xix. 15. And if he passes through the desert, it is well for him if he can light upon a cave, or a hut, which some one before him may have erected for a temporary shelter. And this last is what I conceive to be here meant by *מלון ארבים melon orchim*, a solitary, and not very comfortable, situation; but yet preferable to the chagrin of living continually in the society of men of profligate manners.

*Ver. 4. Take ye heed, &c.]* See Micah, vii. 5. Matt. x. 35.



5 And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.

6 Thine habitation *is* in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.

7 Therefore, thus saith the LORD of Hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?

8 Their tongue *is as* an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: *one* speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.

9 ¶ Shall I not visit them for these *things*? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

10 For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through *them*; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone.

11 And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and

a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

12 ¶ Who *is* the wise man, that may understand this? and *who is he* to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?

13 And the LORD saith, because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein:

14 But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:

15 Therefore thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, *even* this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

16 I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: And I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them.

17 ¶ Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women,

*Ver. 6. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit*] Houbigant follows the LXX, and renders the verse, *They add usury to usury, and deceit to deceit: they refuse, &c.* The experimental knowledge of God, which is true religion, is incompatible with the practice of any wickedness; and therefore it is natural enough for those, who are resolved at all events to abide in their evil courses, to divest themselves of all religious principles, which if insufficient to restrain, will be sure at least to be very troublesome to them; for this cause they are ready to say unto God, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,* Job, xxi. 14.

*Ver. 7. Behold, I will melt them*] The prophet uses here the same metaphor as in chap. vi. 28, &c. where see the note. Houbigant renders the last clause; *So will I do, for the perversity of the daughter of my people.*

*Ver. 8. Their tongue is as an arrow shot out*] *Their tongue is the arrow of a murderer.*

*Ver. 10. For the mountains, &c.*] These words, says Houbigant, as they now lie, must belong either to Jeremiah, or the daughter of Zion; and yet it follows in the next verse, *And I will make*; which are the words of God: therefore this verse should be rendered, *Take ye up a weeping and wailing on the mountains; a lamentation in the dwellings of the wilderness; for they are desolate, because there is no traveller; nor is the voice of cattle heard in them: both the fowl, &c.* The prophet here describes the total desolation of the country. The remark which St. Jerome makes on Hof. iv. 3. is suitable to this place: "He who thinks that this

"has not happened to the people of Israel, let him behold Illyricum, let him behold Thrace, Macedonia, and Pannonia, and all that tract of land from Propontis and Bosphorus to the Alps; and he will then confess that "not only men, but likewise every animal which was "formed for the use of men, are extinct and swept away "by the besom of destruction."

*Ver. 15. Behold, I will feed, &c.*] See Deut. xxix. 18.

*Ver. 17. Consider ye, &c.*] The first lamentations for the dead consisted only in the sudden bursts of insuppressible grief, like that of David over his son Absalom, 2 Sam. xix. 4. But, as men grew refined, it was not deemed sufficient for the surviving relation to vent his sorrows in these natural and artless expressions of woe; but, unsatisfied with the genuine language of sighs and tears, he endeavoured not only to vent his sorrow by terms of grief, but likewise joined others as partners in his sorrow, and strove to extort tears from the surrounding crowd. This was practised by David in his lamentation for Abner, 2 Sam. iii. 32, 33, 34. This ostentation of grief gave rise to the custom of hiring persons to weep at funerals, which the Phrygians and Greeks borrowed from the Hebrews. *Women* were generally employed on these occasions, either because it was an office more suitable to the softness of a female mind, or because, the tenderer passions being predominant in that sex, they succeeded better in their parts; nor were there ever wanting artists well instructed in the discipline of mourning, and ready to hire out their lamentations and tears on any emergency. It is the chief excellence

that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come:

18 And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.

19 For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out.

20 Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation:

21 For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.

cellence of other arts to imitate nature; it was likewise esteemed so in this. Their funeral dirges, therefore, were composed in imitation of those which had been poured forth by genuine and sincere grief. Their sentences were short, querulous, pathetic, simple, and unadorned; somewhat laboured indeed, because they were composed in metre, and to be sung to the pipe, as we learn from Matt. ix. 23. and from Homer, where, speaking of Hector's funeral, he says,

A melancholy choir attend around,  
With plaintive sighs, and music's solemn sound:  
Alternately they sing, alternate flow  
Th' obedient tears, melodious in their woe.

See POPE'S ILLIAD, Book xxiv. ver. 900. and the Note.

St. Jerome tells us, that even to his time this custom continued in Judæa; that women at funerals, with dishevelled hair and naked breasts, endeavoured in a modulated voice to unite others in lamentation with them. There are several traces of this custom to be met with among the prophets, who frequently delivered their predictions of approaching calamities, not without a singular elegance, in the form of funeral dirges. The poem before us, from this to the 22d verse, is both an illustration and confirmation of what has been delivered upon this subject, and worthy of the reader's frequent perusal, on account of its striking pathos, moral sentiments, and fine images; particularly in the 21st verse, where death is described in as elevated a prosopopœia as can be conceived. See Lowth's 2d Prelection, and Calmet.

Ver. 22. *Speak, Thus, &c.*] *For it shall come to pass, saith the Lord, that the carcases, &c.* Houb.

*And as the handful after the harvest-man*] *Behind the reaper.* This alludes to the manner of reaping corn in the field, where the reaper, as soon as he has cut what he can hold in his hand, lets it fall, and passes on; but is usually followed by another, who gathers what is cut, and binds it into sheaves. But here it is said, that there would be

22 Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even the carcases of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvest-man, and none shall gather them.

23 ¶ Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:

24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

25 ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised, with the uncircumcised;

26 Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the

none to gather; and consequently the corn, after being cut, would lie neglected and rot on the ground, which renders the simile a very apt one.

Ver. 23, 24. *Let not the wise man glory, &c.*] "Unless this wisdom hath for its object God himself, and teaches us to despise ourselves, to be humbled beneath the mighty hand of God, and to glory in him alone. All other wisdom is vain and dangerous." Phocylides has said excellently,

If wisdom, strength, or riches be thy lot;  
Boast not, but rather think thou hast them not:  
One God alone, from whom these gifts proceed,  
Is wise, is mighty, and is rich indeed.

Ver. 26. *And all that are in the utmost corners*] *All having the angular tonsure, or, having the corners of their hair polled.* The reader will find a more particular account of these nations, who drank of the cup of the Lord's fury after Jerusalem had drunk it, in ch. xxv. 17, &c. They used circumcision as well as the Jews; but are here called *uncircumcised*, as being in the same state with Israel; that is to say, uncircumcised in heart. Respecting the tonsure of the Arabs, see the note on Lev. xix. 27.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, With bitter grief the prophet beheld the sins of his people, and the ruin which they provoked.

1. He wishes that his head were waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that streams incessant might run down his cheeks for the miseries that he foresaw. Weary of dwelling amid so polluted a people, and that he might give full vent to his sorrows, or be removed from the dreadful spectacle before him, he wishes for some desert, some lonely cave; preferring the company of the savages of the wood to so wicked a nation; and safer amid the lions of the forest, than his own treacherous and cruel countrymen. Note; (1.) A good man must be a patriot, and cannot, unmoved, behold the ruin of his country. (2.) They

children of Ammon, and Moab, and all *that are* in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all *these* nations *are* uncircum-

cised, and all the house of Israel *are* uncircumcised in the heart.

They who suffer nothing to interrupt their carnal joy, must never hope to receive the blessedness promised to those that mourn. (3.) It is a dreadful symptom of the wickedness, and a sign of the approaching ruin of a people, when the souls of God's prophets, like Lot, are vexed with their abominations, and weary of dwelling in the midst of them.

2. The causes of these complaints are,

[1.] The sins of his people. They were all *adulterers*, corporally and spiritually; an assembly of *treacherous* men, apostates from God and his worship, and false and faithless one to another; bending *their tongues like their bow for lies*; destitute of all zeal for truth, yea, rather opposing it with all their power; proceeding from evil to worse, instead of repenting and reforming; ignorant of God, and desiring to remain so. Not a neighbour, no, not a brother could be trusted, so selfish and perfidious were they grown. Lies were become familiar to their tongue, and slander the constant topic of their conversation; and no truth was to be expected from them. They spared no pains to compass their ends; they *wear themselves to commit iniquity*, so eagerly were they bent on it. In the midst of such a people the prophet dwelt, and therefore had need be on his guard against them; nor wonder if they acted deceitfully with him, when they acted hypocritically towards God, as the latter clause of ver. 6. may be interpreted. Through the delusions of their false prophets they refused to receive the knowledge of God: no arrow was sharper than their bitter and lying words: and, while the guise of friendship and peace seemed to breathe in all their discourse, mischief was in their hearts, and they lay in wait to make a prey of those whom they had deluded. *Note*; (1.) Lewdness and lying are among the most deadly and prevailing iniquities. (2.) To be silent, and refuse to espouse the suffering cause of God and truth, is highly criminal. (3.) They who have accustomed themselves to a habit of lying, will not speak truth, even when they have no purpose or design to serve, but lie for lying's sake. (4.) The service of sin is usually a wearisome task; and yet so enslaved are sinners to the love of it, that, though the pain exceeds the pleasure, they pursue it yet again, and take more pains to go to hell, than was requisite to carry them to heaven. (5.) There is no stopping in the way of wickedness; every sin indulged opens a way for a greater. (6.) In a wicked and deceitful world we need be ever on our guard.

[2.] The sufferings of his people. They shall be put into the hottest furnace of affliction, to melt and try them, since all other methods have proved ineffectual. The sword shall be bathed in blood, the country wasted, the villages burnt, the lowing herds and bleating sheep no more be heard on the mountains, plundered and carried off by the Chaldean army; not a living creature seen passing through the desolate land; even the wild beasts and the fowls of heaven shall desert it, unable to find food for their hunger, except the dragons, who take up their abode in the ruined palaces of Jerusalem; and so utter will be the overthrow, that not an inhabitant shall remain in all the cities of Judah. Thus will God visit for their iniquities, and

his soul be avenged on such a people as this. *Note*; (1.) In the severest of the afflictions that God lays upon any land, he intends to make the same fire which consumes the wicked, a means of purifying the remaining faithful, and separating them as silver from the dross. (2.) The iniquities of the people have often turned a fruitful land into barrenness. (3.) The prophet who beholds these desolations cannot withhold the tear of pity; yea, his eyes are fountains to bewail them: and when we look round upon the world which lieth in wickedness, and see that great day of the perdition of ungodly men approach, ought we not to be more affected at a sight so unspeakably more terrible?

2dly, If the people perish, it is not for want of awful and repeated warnings.

1. A summons is given to the wise men among them, to understand and declare the cause of these calamities; but, as no such are found, the prophet himself is commissioned to proclaim both the reason of God's judgments and the terribleness of the vengeance which he is about to execute. Their sin is, apostacy from the worship and service of God commanded in the law, and disobedience against all the warnings and notices that he had sent unto them; in direct opposition to which, they followed the imaginations of their own wicked hearts, and served Baalim, a multitude of false gods, plunging into idolatry after their fathers' example, and filling up the measure of their iniquities. Most righteous therefore, and just as fearful, are God's judgments upon them. They shall be fed with bread of wormwood, and water of gall, the bitterest afflictions. The sword and the famine shall devour them, and their carcases lie unburied on the plain as dung, or as a handful dropped after the harvest-man, which is not regarded or gathered up; and if a few escape the general massacre, they shall be scattered in heathen lands, which their fathers never knew, and even there shall find no rest, the sword of vengeance still pursuing them till they are consumed. *Note*; (1.) Every step of departure from God tends only to misery. (2.) Wherever the sinner flies, or is driven, the curse of God follows him closer than his shadow.

2. A summons is sent to the mourning women. It was customary among the Jews, as well as other nations, to hire such on the decease of their relations, who, by their cries, their doleful complaints, and melancholy ditties, awakened afresh the sorrows of the survivors. There would now be abundant occasion for them, when the multitude of deaths by famine and the sword should fill every house with lamentation, and cause not merely fictitious, but real anguish; when out of Zion the voice of wailing is heard, *How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded*, at seeing their city stormed and taken, themselves captives, driven from their dwellings, and forced from their own, are led into a strange land. Under such a dire calamity God calls on them, as most befitting their circumstances, to weep and wail. The word is addressed to the women, whose husbands probably had fallen in the siege; and, the men

being

## C H A P. X.

*The unequal comparison of God and idols. The prophet exhorteth to flee from the calamity to come: he lamenteth the spoil of the tabernacle by foolish pastors: he maketh an humble supplication.*

[Before Christ 600.]

**H**EAR ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel:

2 Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

being chiefly slain, scarcely any but they remained to lament the desolations. They are enjoined to *teach their daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation*. So universal would be the misery, that none would be exempted from feeling it, and therefore all are called to bewail it. *For death is come up into our windows, like an enemy that scales the walls, though the gates are shut; and is entered into our palaces: the king on the throne, as well as the beggar on the dunghill, is exposed to the famine and the sword; and even the children in the streets are murdered; and the young men, unable to make resistance, are slain by their cruel enemies, who have stormed the city.* Note; (1.) This is a vale of tears, where death continually spreads his ravages, and wakens up our sorrows. (2.) No palaces can keep out this invader: kings and princes are dying worms. (3.) To grieve for the dead is natural, humane, pious; only let us not be swallowed up with immoderate sorrow. (4.) Many lament their losses and crosses bitterly, who never lament their sins, which are the occasion of them; and this is *the sorrow of the world which worketh death*.

3dly, Having foretold their impending calamities, the prophet concludes with a warning to them, not to have recourse to those vain confidences which would prove a refuge of lies; but to take that only method which remained of preventing their ruin, returning to the knowledge of God, and obedience to his will.

1. He warns them against depending on their own wisdom, power, and wealth, to protect them; and directs them to the only sure refuge. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; as if by his politics he could avert the storm: neither let the mighty man glory in his might, which would afford no safety when fighting against God. Let not the rich man glory in his riches; as if these could bribe the invaders, or hire auxiliaries to defend them; for vain would these things prove. If therefore any man would have solid grounds for glorying, it must be in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth me, the only object in whom a sinner can glory; that I am the Lord, the only hope, help, and Saviour of the guilty; which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; shewing mercy to the miserable, pardoning the sinful, strengthening the weak, just in all his providences, and righteous in all his ways; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.* Note; (1.) Worldly supports are often a dangerous snare: Wisdom, strength, and riches, are apt to swell the heart with pride

3 For the customs of the people *are vain*: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.

4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

5 They *are* upright as the palm-tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also *is it* in them to do good.

and self-importance, and then they prove our ruin. (2.) Christ is our only glory. Without him we have nothing but what we had need to be ashamed of, and renounce; in him there is all fulness. (3.) What is God's delight, should be ours; and to be partakers of his compassions, to walk in his judgments, and be found in the practice of righteousness and true holiness, will be infinitely more profitable than the highest attainment of worldly wisdom, or the greatest possessions of worldly wealth.

2. He warns them against trusting in their peculiar privileges; as promising themselves, because of the covenant of circumcision, that they should be preserved from evil; for this would stand them in no stead while their hearts were uncircumcised, and they continued devoted to the service, not of the Lord, but of their lusts; therefore they would share with Egypt and Edom, and the neighbouring uncircumcised nations, in their punishment, and find no distinction in the day when God arose to judgment. Note; Our partaking of the outward privileges and seals of the covenant will stand us in no stead, if we are destitute of the inward and spiritual grace; yea, will rather aggravate our guilt. The *baptized*, unconverted, and unhumiliated sinner, will meet even a heavier doom than the *unbaptized* unconverted heathen.

## C H A P. X.

*Ver. 1. Hear ye the word, &c.]* Jeremiah continues his denunciations against Judah: he said at the conclusion of the preceding chapter, that the Lord would punish, without distinction, all those who offended him, Jews as well as Gentiles. He here informs them, that if they would avoid this vengeance of the Lord, they must quit their impieties, and have nothing to do with the superstitious practices of idolaters. See Calmet.

*Ver. 2. Learn not the way of the heathen]* It is well known, that the Chaldeans and Egyptians were remarkable for their attention to astrology; and therefore the prophet here exhorts the Jews, that when they were to live among those people, they should pay no regard to the predictions which they might utter from the heavenly bodies, whereby they terrified the people with the apprehension of impending evils. Instead of, *for the heathen are dismayed*, we may read, *although the heathen, &c.*

*Ver. 3. The people]* The nations.

*Ver. 5. They are upright, &c.]* For they are like the trunk of

6 Forasmuch as *there is* none like unto thee, O LORD; thou *art* great, and thy name *is* great in might.

7 Who would not fear thee, O king of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise *men* of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, *there is* none like unto thee.

8 But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock *is* a doctrine of vanities:

9 Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple *is* their clothing: they *are* all the work of cunning *men*.

10 But the LORD *is* the true God; he *is* the living God, and an everlasting King: at

his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

11 Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, *even* they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

12 He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.

13 When he uttereth his voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

of the palm-tree, &c. Houb. "They are inflexible, immoveable, fixed, without action or motion, like the trunk of a palm-tree;" a comparison which admirably suits the ancient statues seen in Egypt and elsewhere, before the art of sculpture attained the perfection which it afterwards did in Greece. See Calmet.

Ver. 6. Forasmuch, &c.] *There is nothing comparable to thee, O Lord; thou art great, and great is thy name in power.* Houb.

Ver. 7. For to thee doth it appertain] That is, according to some, *to thee doth it appertain to be feared.* Houbigant renders it, *For the government becomes thee, because amongst all the wise men of the nations, &c.*

Ver. 8. But they are altogether brutish, &c.] *But they are altogether foolish, and have received the instruction of those which are nothing but wood.* Houb.

*The stock is a doctrine of vanities]* The true meaning and force of this passage seems to have escaped the notice of all the commentators, except Blayney. מוסר *musar*, properly signifies *rectifying* or *correcting* a false notion by just reproof; and by *vanities* are meant *idols*, so called from their being of no real use or advantage to those who had recourse to their assistance. And this unprofitableness of the idol the very dull and senseless matter, says the prophet, out of which it was formed, is capable of demonstrating. But the *rebuke*, strictly speaking, is not directed to the idol, but to those who had not sense to perceive, that all the efforts of human art could never change an inanimate log of wood into an animated being, possessed of power and intelligence far surpassing the person from whom its origin was derived. There is, therefore, an energy and pointedness in this short sentence, at least equal, in my opinion, to whatever has been said upon the same subject by the most spirited writer, whether sacred or profane. Not even the keen raillery of the Roman satirist in those celebrated lines, *Olim truncus eram ficulnus\**, &c. (Hor. Sat. lib. I. sat. viii. 1.) cuts with greater severity.

\* In days of yore our godsh p flood,  
A very worthless log of wood.

Ver. 9. Tarshish, and—Uphaz] *Tarshish* was a place at this time celebrated through all the East for its commerce. Calmet has endeavoured to prove, in his dissertation upon Ophir, that the *gold of Uphaz* was the same with that of the river Pison; and Bochart supposes *Uphaz* to be the same with Ophir in India, near Zeilan, a place famous for gold.

*Blue and purple is their clothing]* The splendor and magnificence of dress seems among the ancients to have consisted very much in the richness of the colours; the art of dying to perfection, which was esteemed a matter of great skill, being known and practised by very few. The excellency of the Tyrian purple is celebrated by both sacred and profane authors; and the blue, which from many passages of Scripture we find to have been in great request, was also imported from remote countries as an article of expensive luxury. See Ezek. xxvii. 7, 24.

Ver. 11. Thus shall ye say, &c.] This verse is in the Chaldee language, and it appears here as a kind of parenthesis. Houbigant thinks, that the most probable reason why it is here inserted in the Chaldee, and not in the Hebrew, is, that Jeremiah prescribes to the Jews what they shall answer, in living among idolaters, and using the Chaldee language; hereby prefiguring that they should be the captives of the Chaldees.

Ver. 13. When he uttereth his voice, &c.] "When the Almighty utters his voice, or sends his thunders abroad, the clouds immediately precipitate in torrents of rain; and as God causes the vapours to ascend in clouds from every quarter of the earth, so he joins two contrary things together; ordaining great flashes of lightning to break forth with the rain; the latter by its moisture preventing the ill effects which might result from the scorching heat of the former." See Psal. xxix. 3, &c. cxxxv. 7. and the note. In Job, mention is made of the treasures of the snow and hail, chap. xxxviii. 22. Virgil, by a figure very similar to this, describes Æolus as keeping the winds and storms confined in caves:

14 Every man is brutish in *his* knowledge : every founder is confounded by the graven image : for his molten image *is* falsehood, and *there is* no breath in them.

15 They *are* vanity, and the work of errors : in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

16 The Portion of Jacob *is* not like them : for he *is* the former of all *things*, and Israel *is* the rod of his inheritance : The LORD of Hosts *is* his name.

17 ¶ Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress.

18 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them that they may find *it so*.

19 ¶ Woe is me for my hurt ! my wound

is grievous : but I said, Truly this *is* a grief, and I must bear it.

20 My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken : my children are gone forth of me, and they *are* not : *there is* none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.

21 For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD : therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.

22 Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons.

23 ¶ O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself : *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

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whose tyrant binds  
The blust'ring tempests, and reluctant winds :  
Their rage imperial Æolus restrains  
With rocky dungeons, and enormous chains.

ÆN. I ver. 52.

Ver. 14. *Every man is brutish in his knowledge*] Or, according to some, *Every man is made foolish by his knowledge*. "The most skilful maker of statues and idols is convinced " hereby of his folly ; for if he were truly wise, how could " he worship any thing so weak and vain ? " What follows seems to favour this interpretation. See ver. 8.

Ver. 16. *The Portion of Jacob*] Upon the principles of heathen theology, every nation was committed to the care and superintendency of its own tutelary god, which was styled its *portion*, on account of the peculiar relation which was supposed to subsist between them. *The portion of Jacob*, therefore, is the same as the God of Jacob, he who had taken upon himself the guardianship and protection of that family. But he was distinguished from all the rest, who were falsehood and vanity all of them, having no other existence than as lifeless images, the work of deluded men ; whereas he was the creator of the universe, of all that exists ; and that there might be no room to mistake the Being intended, he is farther characterized as he who had made choice of Israel for the special object of his concern, had marked him out for his own possession, as with a measuring rod ; and to whom the name of JEHOVAH belonged. Oh, how little did they know or value their privileges !

Ver. 17. *Gather up thy wares*] That is, " Collect to " Jerusalem all that you have valuable in the country : fly " thither for refuge, with your best effects ; for the enemy " will soon extend himself all over your land, and render it " desolate." The Vulgate translates the word כִּנְעֻתָיִךְ *kinatbeik*, which we render *wares*, by *confusion* ; meaning the idols, the causes of their disgrace and confusion : " Cause " them," says the prophet, " to be assembled together, and

" brought into the city, to defend it for you against the " enemy." See Calmet.

Ver. 18. *Behold, I will sling, &c.*] *Behold, I will inclose as in a net the inhabitants of this land ; and will surround them with a siege, that they may perceive me to be their avenger.* Houb. *That they may find it so*, is read by some, *That they may find me* ; " That, driven to distress, they may seek me, " call upon me, and recover my favour." See chap. xxix. 13, 14.

Ver. 19. *Woe is me, &c.*] The prophet here pathetically laments the overthrow of his country ; and either in his own person, or in that of his country, bewails the plundering and desolation of the cities and houses, as if they were so many shepherds' tents. See the following verse.

Ver. 22. *Bruit*] *A noise or report* : that is, the news of the approach of Nebuchadnezzar's army.

Ver. 23. *O Lord, I know, &c.* " Thou rulest, O Lord, " all events ; all that happens comes to pass through an " effect of thy adorable providence. It is not in man to " hinder that which hath been once absolutely resolved by " thee : so that since, Lord, thou art pleased to make us " feel the awful effects of thy justice, chastise us ; but " spare my weakness : *Correct me, but with judgment, not in " thine anger,*" ver. 24. Again : " I know, O Lord, that " man, left to himself, cannot lead himself into good by " the power of nature : that all he has and all he does " of good, he derives from thy mercy." Theodoret and others explain it thus : " We know, O Lord, that the " prince whom thou sendest against us, comes not without " thy orders ; that the success of his arms, and the good " fortune of his enterprize, proceed only from thee : but " deliver us, O Lord, from this terrible enemy ; and if we " have merited chastisement, may we receive it at thine " hand ! Punish us as a father, and not as a judge." See Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As they were shortly to be carried captives to Babylon, a place most remarkably given to idolatry,

24 O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.

25 Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families

that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

idolatry, superstition, and judicial astrology, there was need to guard them against the temptations to which they would be there exposed.

1. They must not learn the ways of the heathen nations, nor follow their works. From the aspect of the heavens, from eclipses, and the conjunction of the planets, the astrologers pretended to foretel the fate of kingdoms, and the destiny of men; and their predictions, heard with superstitious awe, terrified the heathen: but they must shew no regard to these prognostications, much less pay divine honours to the sun, moon, and stars, as these men did. Nor must they join in their idolatry, and the *vain customs or ceremonies* of religion which they used. A senseless log is the object of their adoration, cut from the wood, and squared by the carpenter; and, however decked with gold and silver, and adorned with costliest robes of blue and purple, yet is it unable to stand without being nailed and fastened, or to move without being carried. It can neither hear the prayer of its votaries, nor speak a word in answer to their requests. Such a *doctrine of vanities is the stock, a work of errors and falsehood*, which must deceive and disappoint those who are so infatuated as to expect aught from it: unable alike to do good or evil, and therefore in no wise to be made the object either of fear or hope. *Altogether brutish and foolish* are the worshippers, and equally *brutish the maker in his knowledge*, who vainly conceits that the work of his hands can be possessed of divinity. *Every founder is confounded*, who, after all his pains to make his god, can receive no benefit from him: for how should they convey life, or any of the blessings of it, to others, which have *no breath in them*, inanimate in themselves? yea, so far from helping others, that they are unable to help themselves? and *in the time of their visitation* these gods, who have made neither the heaven nor the earth, *shall perish*, with their senseless devotees.

2. The prophet directs them to the only proper object of their worship, fear, and love; and that is, the glorious JEHOVAH, the only living and true God.

[1.] *There is none like unto him*] He is without a rival, and above all comparison: none can either bestow such mercies or inflict such miseries as he. *O Lord, thou art great*; transcendently great and glorious in his adorable perfections, and all his works of creation, providence, and grace; and *thy name is great*, exalted far above all blessing and praise. *Who would not fear thee, O king of nations?* whose kingdom ruleth over all, the work of whose hands the whole creation is, and therefore by right he should be universally feared and worshipped: *for to thee doth it appertain*, and to thee alone: to place that fear and offer that worship elsewhere, argues both deep impiety and senseless stupidity. For none in wisdom, none in power, among earth's mightiest sons, with him can be compared. *Note*; (1.) God's eternal power and godhead, by the works of creation, are so declared to all the world, as to leave idolaters without excuse.

(2.) The more we contemplate the unsearchable greatness and glory of our God, the more shall we be filled with reverence and godly fear, and lost in wonder and adoration.

[2.] He is the only *true God*, and all pretenders to deity besides are false and counterfeit. *He is the living God*, or *Gods*, the Trinity in Unity, having life in and of himself, whilst all creatures receive theirs from him, and idols are dead and inanimate. He is an *everlasting king*, subsisting from all eternity, ruling over all, and of his dominion there is no end, while these are all the creatures of yesterday, and hourly running to decay. *Note*; If God be our king, it behoves us to see that we approve ourselves faithful subjects, dependent on his protection, devoted to his service.

[3.] He is the Creator, Governor, and Judge of all. *He hath made the earth by his power*, suspended in the vast expanse; and yet so firm, that it cannot be moved from the place where God hath appointed it to perform its revolutions; and in the beautiful disposition of all things in it his infinite wisdom as well as power appears; and *hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion*, as a canopy over us, decked with those bright luminaries which peculiarly display his glory. At his will, the whole machine is governed: he speaks; the heavens lower, the vapours rise, the lightnings flash, the thunders roll, the rain descends, the tempests roar, and all under his control. When he cometh forth in judgment, *at his wrath the earth shall tremble*, afraid to meet the judge upon his throne, and *the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation*; if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little, it will burn to the nethermost hell. Most justly, therefore, doth he claim, and we are bound to pay, our worship, adoration, and service to him, and him alone.

[4.] He is *the portion of Jacob*, and therefore they are under peculiar obligations to adore and serve him. He has showered upon them his blessings on every side: *he is the former of all things*, and not like idol vanities; and *Israel is the rod of his inheritance*, separated for his peculiar service; *the Lord of Hosts is his name*, his distinguished title, forasmuch as he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him in the hosts of heaven, as well as among the inhabitants of the earth. *Note*; (1.) They who have God for their portion, cannot wish for more; for he is able to do for them exceeding abundantly above all they can ask or think. (2.) God's Israel—the church of the faithful—are his inheritance; for they who choose him for their God, he delights in as his people; and his love and favour are better than the life itself.

2dly, We have,  
i. The threatened ruin of Judah and Jerusalem. To secure their goods from the Chaldean army, the Jews are here represented as gathering them together, and conveying them to the fortress of Zion; but they will find it no place of safety. As a stone out of a sling, so easily, so violently should they be cast out of their land and city, and sink into



## C H A P. XI.

*Jeremiah proclaimeth God's covenant, rebuketh the Jews' disobeying thereof, prophesieth evils to come upon them, and upon the men of Anathoth, for conspiring to kill him.*

[Before Christ 608.]

**T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2 Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem ;

into the depths of distress, *that they may find it so*, as the prophets have spoken, to whose word they refused to attend. *Note*; They who have mocked at hell and damnation, as bugbears designed to awe the minds of the superstitious, will, to their cost, *find it so*, that these are dreadful realities.

2. A mournful lamentation is made over their calamities : which some regard as the language of Zion bemoaning herself, but rather may be the words of the prophet affected at the view of their miseries, and sympathizing with them. *Woe is me for my hurt, or my breach*, when the walls of Jerusalem were battered down, the Chaldeans entered, and terribly massacred the inhabitants ; *but I said, Truly, this is a grief, and I must bear it* ; it was bitter indeed, but he desired to submit with patience : *my tabernacle is spoiled*, both the city and temple, *and all my cords are broken*, so that the ruin is irreparable. *My children are gone forth of me into captivity, and none left to repair the desolation*. And no wonder their affairs are so desperate, when *the pastors are become brutish* ; the rulers in church and state, instead of attempting to prevent, hastened their ruin by their sin and folly ; they *have not sought the Lord* in any of their distresses, but left him far above out of their sight, *therefore they shall not prosper* ; no attempts to secure themselves shall succeed, *and all their flocks shall be scattered* ; their enemies shall prevail, and that suddenly. *Behold, the noise of the bruit is come*, intelligence of the Chaldean army advancing ; *a great commotion out of the north country, from Babylon, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons*, a righteous retaliation upon those who made them *a den of thieves*. *Note* ; (1.) In our afflictions God permits us to complain, but he forbids us to murmur. (2.) When the pastors are brutish, no marvel that the people are blind. (3.) They who live without prayer, and seek not to God for counsel and help, must needs err from the right way, and perish in their sins.

3. Though the people have no ears to hear his preaching, God hath an ear to hear his prayer, and therefore to him the prophet looks up.

[1.] He acknowledges God's over-ruling providence and guidance in all the affairs of men. *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps* ; a superior power controls his thoughts and designs, and an unseen hand guides his steps, as was the case of Nebuchadnezzar in this invasion, and more generally may be applied to all mankind. Whatever schemes we form, the event is not in our own power : when we mean only to pursue our own purposes, God leads us insensibly to fulfil his designs ; therefore, amidst

3 And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel ; Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant,

4 Which I commanded your fathers in the day *that* I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you : so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God :

5 That I may perform the oath which I

all our contrivances, we must entirely refer ourselves to him for the success, conscious that we have no power of ourselves, without the divine grace and aid, to help ourselves. The Lord must dictate, guide, support, and prosper us, and then we shall walk aright.

[2.] In the name of the people, he intreats the removal or alleviation of their heavy judgments. *O Lord, correct me*, for that they must expect, and acknowledge it to be their just desert ; *but with judgment, in measure ; not in thine anger*, as the wrath of an enemy, but in love, as the chastisement of a father, *lest thou bring me to nothing* ; for if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little, who can abide it ? *Note* ; (1.) Correction from God is kindness ; and his rod, however grievous for the time to the flesh, we must not wish to have removed till it has done its work. (2.) God's afflictions on his people are designed not to bring them to nothing, but to bring them to himself and to glory.

[3.] He beseeches God to remember their oppressors, and to recompence them according to the work of their hands. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not* ; true believers are corrected in mercy ; but God's enemies are to be destroyed in wrath ; *and upon the families that call not on thy name*, the nations of the ungodly, who neither know nor worship the true God ; *for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate* ; which, though God hath permitted as their just punishment, does not at all lessen the guilt and malice of their enemies who persecute them maliciously. *Note* ; (1.) Families who live without prayer are to be accounted heathens. (2.) Ignorance of God is the inlet to all sin. (3.) When God hath corrected his people, he often turns the rod, and leaves on the instruments that he employs the severest marks of his indignation.

## C H A P. XI.

*Ver. 1. The word, &c.*] This discourse may be considered as a continuation of the foregoing, which the prophet delivered to the people, at their entrance into the temple ; chap. vii. This at least is insinuated, ver. 15. or rather, the Lord delivered his word to Jeremiah at the time when Josiah assembled the people in the temple at Jerusalem, to renew their covenant with the Lord. See 2 Chron. xxxiv. 29, 31. and Calmet.

*Ver. 5. So be it, O Lord*] That is to say, "Cursed be they who have rebelled, &c." or rather, *So it is, O Lord*. "Thou hast fulfilled thy promises with the strictest fidelity."

have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as *it is* this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD.

6 Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.

7 For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day *that* I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, *even* unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice.

8 Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded *them* to do; but they did *them* not.

9 And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

10 They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

11 ¶ Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.

12 Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble.

13 For *according to* the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and *according to* the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to *that* shameful thing, *even* altars to burn incense unto Baal.

14 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear *them* in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.

15 What hath my beloved to do in mine house, *seeing* she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest.

16 The LORD called thy name, A green olive-tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken.

17 For the LORD of Hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger, in offering incense unto Baal.

18 ¶ And the LORD hath given me knowledge *of it*, and I know *it*: then thou shewedst me their doings.

19 But I *was* like a lamb or an ox *that is*

*Ver. 8. Therefore I will bring] Therefore have I brought.* It is of the nature of a covenant to denounce penalties against the presumptuous transgressor of it. And the sanctions of the Mosaic covenant may be seen scattered through different parts of the law, but particularly Lev. xxvi. 14, &c. Deut. xi. 26—28. xxvii. xxviii. xxx. 15, &c. Our English translators have rendered נִבְנִי *vaabi* in the future tense; but it has the signification of the preter, because of the *vau* *conversive*. And there is no impropriety in saying, that God had already brought upon the people the evils, which he had not only resolved on, but had begun in some measure to carry into execution.

*Ver. 9. A conspiracy is found, &c.]* By a *conspiracy* is meant a general consent and agreement to forsake the worship of the true God, and to serve other gods. It was also a part of this conspiracy in the citizens of Jerusalem, to take off Jeremiah by *poison*, which he tells us the Lord discovered to him, ver. 18.

*Ver. 15. What hath my beloved to do, &c.]* The meaning of the verse seems to be, “Why doth this, my chosen and

“peculiar people, (my *spouse*, as they love to call themselves, and as they once really were,) make their appearance before me in my house, since they have gone a whoring after several of the idol-nations around them, and therefore have disowned me, and broken the marriage contract or covenant which was between us? *The holy flesh is passed from thee*: the sacrifices which thou offeredst to me as an atonement for thy sins, do not at all profit thee, being rendered unacceptable to me, by those many and gross sins in which thou continuest without remorse.” See Lowth and Calmet. Houbigant, dissatisfied with this interpretation, gives the version following: *What was the cause, that this my daughter, born at home, should commit her wickedness? Will they who bring thee much holy flesh, take away thine iniquities, that thou gloriest concerning it?* See his note.

*Ver. 16. The Lord called thy name, A green olive-tree]* The Jewish nation is sometimes compared to an *olive-tree*, as well as to a *vine*. See Psal. lii. 8. Instead of, *With the noise of a great tumult*, some render it, *At the sound of his voice*, meaning the thunder. Compare chap. x. 13.

brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, *saying*, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.

20 But, O LORD of Hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

21 Therefore thus saith the LORD of the

men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, Prophecy not in the name of the LORD, that thou die not by our hand:

22 Therefore thus saith the LORD of Hosts, Behold, I will punish them: the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine:

23 And there shall be no remnant of them: for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, *even* the year of their visitation.

*Ver. 18, 19. The Lord hath given me knowledge.]* It is generally agreed by the commentators, that Jeremiah here speaks of his own sufferings as figurative of those of the Messiah. All the churches agree, says St. Jerome, that these words and the following respect Jesus Christ and his passion. It was against his life that they formed their designs: he was the true lamb, meek and innocent; he it was who was fastened to the cross. Jeremiah is here a figure of the divine Saviour; he here suffers for his brethren, and represents in his person that divine original, who was a man of grief, and tried by all sorts of affliction. The Vulgate, Bochart, and Houbigant, read the first clause of the 19th verse, *But I was like a gentle lamb, which is led to the slaughter, &c.* Instead of, *Let us destroy the tree, &c.* Houbigant reads, and nearly in agreement with the Vulgate, *Let us infect his food with poisoned wood.* "Let us put some deadly and poisonous wood into what he eats."

*Ver. 20. Let me see thy vengeance.] I shall see, &c.*

*Ver. 21. Prophecy not, &c.]* This passage shews abundantly that Jeremiah is to be understood primarily in the literal sense; which does not by any means prevent our understanding it of Jesus Christ in the spiritual. We may hence observe the usage which the prophets generally met with. The people of their own towns and countries could not bear the solemn and alarming truths which they delivered, and therefore became their enemies. See Matt. xiii. 57.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jeremiah is sent of God again to this rebellious house of Judah:

1. To remind them of the tenor of that covenant by which they held the land of promise; the great condition of which was, their obedience; and this God earnestly pressed upon them as the one thing needful, charging their fathers to observe and do all his commandments, as the only means to secure his favour, and their relation to him; promising that, in consequence of this, they should possess the land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey; and this was farther enforced by the awful sanction of that terrible curse which would overtake the breakers of this covenant. God had not ceased from that day to continue his admonitions to them, and urge that fidelity to which they were so strictly obliged. And now this prophet must second those who went before in the same protestations and urgent calls to them, to hear and obey; which that they may do, he earnestly prays, *So be it, O Lord.* Note; They

who withdraw themselves from God's service have no right to expect his protection.

2. To charge them with their gross violations of this covenant, by which they had forfeited all the blessings promised, and incurred all the penalties annexed to it. *They obeyed not*, neither they, nor their fathers; *nor inclined their ear* to the divinely-commissioned messengers, whom from time to time God sent to admonish them; *but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart*, without the least regard to God's law; therefore all the curses denounced against the disobedient lie at their door; and God saw their secret as well as their open wickedness. A general conspiracy is formed among them, to discard God's worship and law, and to introduce the idols and customs of the heathens around them. *The men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, city and country, high and low, are engaged in it.* A little reformation had been made in the days of Josiah, but they quickly turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, and sunk again into idolatry. Israel first led the way, and Judah copied their abominations, so that the covenant which God had made with their fathers was utterly broken. Note; (1.) They who will not be ruled by God's law, must be destroyed under his curse. (2.) Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished.

2dly, The curse follows sin as close as the shadow does the body. We have,

1. Their miserable and helpless case. *Therefore I will bring evil upon them*, the evil of punishment for the evil of sin, *which they shall not be able to escape*; neither their wisdom, nor might, nor riches, shall be able to avert the storm. In vain will be their applications to God, *he will not hear them*: in vain their application to their idols, *they cannot help them*, though so numberless, that not only every city, but every street, had altars erected to that shameful thing *Baal*. Note; (1.) When wrath pursues the sinner, flight is vain. (2.) Prayer comes too late, when it is the time of judgment. (3.) Many cry to God to save them from their sufferings, who never lament the evil of the sins which procured them; and therefore well may he refuse to hear. (4.) All our idols and creature-dependences will be found miserable comforters in a day of calamity. (5.) Sin is a shameful thing; and we must either take shame to ourselves now for it, or be put to everlasting shame in the day of visitation.

2. The prophet is forbidden to pray for them. The decree was

## C H A P. XII.

*Jeremiah, complaining of the prosperity of the wicked, by faith seeth their ruin. God admonishes him of his brethren's treachery against him, and lamenteth his heritage: he promises to the penitent a return from captivity.*

[Before Christ 608.]

**R**IGHTEOUS art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with

thee of *thy* judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? *wherefore* are all they happy that deal very treacherously?

2 Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou *art* near in their mouth, and far from their reins.

3 But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou

was gone forth against them, and the prayers of good men now would be as unavailable as their own. *Note;* They are desperate indeed who are beyond the reach of prayer.

3. Their attendance at God's house could profit them nothing, when their hearts were so false and faithless with him. *What hath my beloved to do in mine house?* This title was given them for their fathers' sake: but to what purpose did they keep up their attendance, *seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many?* committing such scandalous idolatry, as utterly separated them from all communion with God, and made their services barefaced hypocrisy; and the holy flesh is passed from thee; their sacrifices were no longer acceptable to God, and an end would quickly be put to them, when their temple was laid in ruins: *when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest;* and, while this love of and delight in iniquity remained, all services and sacrifices were but an abomination before God. *Note;* They who trust in their external privileges, and outward attendance on the worship and ordinances of God, while their hearts are strangers to vital holiness, and enslaved by sin, will find themselves disowned of God, and all their dependance a delusion.

4. The former favours which they enjoyed, as they served but to aggravate their ingratitude, would be no security to them at present. They were once, indeed, called a green olive-tree, fair and of goodly fruit: God's blessing was upon them, and prosperity surrounded them on every side; but since they have changed their conduct, God hath changed his dispensations of providence towards them. The Chaldeans, at his command, have kindled a fire, and burnt it; and the branches, their princes, priests, and great men, are broken and consumed. God hath pronounced sentence against them for their sins, especially their worship of Baal, which provoked his anger, and brought wrath upon their souls; and, though he planted them, he will utterly root them up. *Note;* (1.) They who sin against God, bring ruin upon their own souls. (2.) They who produce no fruits of holiness, like barren trees, are only fit fuel for the flames.

3dly, They who are sent to bear witness against obstinate sinners, must, with Jeremiah, put their lives in their hand. His fidelity begins now to expose him to the most imminent danger.

1. A conspiracy is formed against him, by the men of Anathoth, his brethren; a city of priests, who should have been foremost to support him, but are so exasperated at his sharp reproofs, that nothing but his blood will satisfy them. *Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof,* either the prophet and his family, or his prophesy; or, as the words

are rendered by some, *Let us corrupt his bread with poison;* signifying the method which they intended to take, in order to dispatch him; and *let us cut him off from the land of the living,* that his name may be no more remembered, and he and his prophesy buried in everlasting oblivion. *Note;* (1.) It is no wonder to see wicked priests the bitterest persecutors of their faithful brethren; it was ever so of old. (2.) People take great pains to be rid of their troublers; but they must have God's permission before any of their crafty designs can take place.

2. God disappoints their scheme, by informing the prophet of his danger, and setting him on his guard; for he was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter, without the least suspicion of their designs. *Note;* (1.) They who are conscious of the integrity of their own conduct, are least ready to entertain suspicions of others. (2.) God preserves us from many unforeseen dangers, into which we should else have blindly rushed. (3.) His prophets and faithful ministers are his peculiar care.

3. He lodges his appeal with God, the righteous judge, who knew his simplicity and their iniquity; therefore he prays, *Let me see thy vengeance on them;* not from a spirit of revenge, but from zeal for God's glory: or it may be considered as prophetic of what would be their case; *for unto thee have I revealed my cause;* and therefore rest satisfied, in full confidence that justice will be done. *Note;* (1.) Whatever man does against us, it is a comfort that we have a righteous judge, who will vindicate those that are oppressed with wrong. (2.) They who devise mischief against others, will find the stone which they have rolled return upon themselves.

4. Judgment is pronounced on the men of Anathoth. They determined to silence the prophet at all hazards. The provocation he had given them was, *prophesying in the name of the Lord,* without their licence, and in a way which reflected such infamy upon their false doctrine and faithless conduct; and if they could not intimidate him from preaching, they resolved to murder him; therefore God denounces his judgments on the men of Anathoth. Famine and the sword shall slay them and their families, and not so much as a remnant shall escape the universal destruction. *Note;* (1.) No prohibition or threatening can stop the mouths of God's true ministers; they are ready to suffer, but resolved to cry aloud and spare not. (2.) The day of visitation is at hand, when all the persecutors of God's people (and especially those perfidious priests, who abuse their power to suppress the testimony of God's few faithful servants, whose life and doctrine reflect upon their ignorance, errors, sloth, and immoralities,) shall receive their righteous doom.

hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.

4 How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end.

5 ¶ If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

6 For even thy brethren, and the house of

thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

7 ¶ I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.

8 Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it.

9 Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour.

10 Many pastors have destroyed my vine-

C H A P. XII.

Ver. 1. Righteous art thou, O Lord] Righteous, &c. therefore will I plead with thee: but I will speak nothing but what is just with thee. Wherefore, &c. Jeremiah speaks this concerning those same wicked persons who consulted to take him off by poison; and he seems to wonder that all things succeeded well with them. But he expresses his wonder by an interrogation, that he may thence take an opportunity to prophesy that their prosperity would not be of long continuance. See Ps. lxxiii. and Houbigant.

Ver. 2. They grow, &c.] Thou art near in their mouth, but far from their reins; signifies, agreeably to another passage in Scripture, They honour thee with their lips, while their heart is far from thee. See Isai. xxix. 13. Matt. xv. 8.

Ver. 3. Pull them out, &c.] Thou wilt separate them as sheep to be sacrificed, and set them apart, &c. Houbigant.

Ver. 4. Because they said, &c.] And yet they said, &c. He will not regard our ways; Houbigant; who follows the LXX. According to our interpretation the meaning is, that those impious people said that God had no regard for human affairs. The word אַחַרִּית *acharith*, rendered last end, signifies, as in Prov. xxiii. 18, reward or recompence.

Ver. 5. In the swelling of Jordan] Houbigant thinks that these are the words of Jeremiah to his fellow-citizens, and to the king and the leaders of the army, whom he addresses in the next verse. He compares the footmen to the horse, says St. Jerome, because all Persia, Chaldea, and those countries, excel in cavalry. Calmet observes, that the manner of expression is proverbial. "The Philistines, Edomites, Ammonites, &c. have been too strong for you; what then will you do with the Chaldeans, who are more numerous and powerful? The first had only infantry; the others abound in cavalry and chariots." The prophet goes on, "You are secure when the land is quiet; but what will you do when Jordan shall overflow? You think to be in security in your own country; but what will you do, when the Chaldean army, composed of multitudes of people around you, shall come and overflow Judæa?" The Scripture frequently expresses the coming of an army into a country by inun-

dation. See ch. xlv. 7. Dan. xi. 10. Calmet thinks, that under the figure of the overflowing Jordan, the prophet principally means the Ammonites, Midianites, Moabites, and Arabs, who were separated from Judæa by the Jordan, and who joined the army of the Chaldeans against the Jews.

Ver. 6. For even thy brethren, &c.] "The Edomites and Ishmaelites, the Moabites and Ammonites, sprung from the same original, from Abraham and Lot, joined the army of Nebuchadnezzar, to make war against thee, O Judah and Jerusalem." They, however, spoke fair words to the Jews before they did so; against which Jeremiah here warns them. See ch. xxvii. 3, &c. Instead of, Yea, they have called a multitude after thee, Houbigant reads, Yea, they will pursue thee with full cry.

Ver. 8. Mine heritage is unto me as a lion, &c.] "Judah hath exalted himself against me; he hath roared like a lion, and carried his wickedness to the last extremities. Therefore I look upon him as a ravenous beast; I view him with horror and detestation. Therefore, never more say, that I suffer wickedness to go unpunished, and that the wicked are the most happy in this world." See Calmet.

Ver. 9. Mine heritage, &c.] Bochart and the LXX. read Mine heritage is unto me as the ravenous hyena; the ravenous beasts are round about it. The context seems indisputably to prove the propriety of this interpretation אַיִת *aiit*, unquestionably signifies a wild beast, as well as a rapacious bird. See Parkhurst on the word. In this view the meaning of the prophet is, "Wherefore do the Jews, whom I have adopted for my sons, and chosen for my heritage, roar, rage, and clamour against me? Are they so lost to every dictate of reason and humanity, as to become like the hyena? Shall I say, that they who inhabit this land are become enormously brutal, and are more like wild beasts than men? especially as their manners are more depraved than those of the most barbarous nations, or of the most rapacious animals? They are certainly beasts of prey, and no longer men: as such, I will send against them other beasts of prey, namely, the Chaldeans, who shall render their country desolate. Come ye,

yard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness;

11 They have made it desolate; *and, being desolate, it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart.*

12 The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall devour from the *one* end of the land even to the *other* end of the land: no flesh shall have peace.

13 They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, *but shall not profit: and they shall be ashamed*

of your revenues because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

14 ¶ Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.

15 And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.

16 And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to

“ye, assemble all the wild beasts of the field; come to devour.” See Boch. Hieroz. vol. i. lib. 3. cap. 11. and Scheuchzer on the place.

Ver. 10. *Many pastors] Many eaters, or devourers.* The same persons here are meant as in chap. vi. 3. namely, Nebuchadnezzar and his army.

Ver. 11. *Being desolate, it mourneth unto me] Lo! it mourneth because it is made desolate.* An elegant figure, whereby the prophet expresses the lamentable condition of the land. *No man layeth it to heart:* “No man acknowledgeth the hand of the Almighty in the calamities that he feels, or humbles himself under them.” This desolation of Judæa, says Bishop Newton, is expressed or implied in several other places in Scripture, and the state of Judæa now for many ages hath been exactly answerable to this description. That a country should be depopulated by the incursions of foreign armies is nothing wonderful; but that it should lie so many ages in this miserable condition, is more than man could foresee, and could be revealed only by God. A celebrated French writer [Voltaire], in his history of the Croisades, pretends to exhibit a true picture of Palestine; and he says, that then “it was just what it is at present, the worst of all the inhabited countries of Asia. It is almost wholly covered with parched rocks, on which there is not one line of soil; if this small territory were cultivated, it might not improperly be compared to Switzerland.” But there is no need to cite authorities in proof that the land is forsaken of its inhabitants, is uncultivated, unfruitful, and desolate; for the enemies of our religion make this very thing an objection to the truth of religion. They say, that so barren and wretched a country could never have been a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have supplied and maintained such multitudes, as it is in Scripture represented to have done. But they do not see and consider, that hereby the prophecies are fulfilled; so that it is rather an evidence for the truth of religion than an argument against it. See his Dissertations on Prophecy, p. 222.

Ver. 14. *Thus saith the Lord against all mine evil neighbours] Against all my neighbouring shepherds, who border upon the inheritance, &c.* Houbigant. This rendering ex-

cellently suits the kings of the Ammonites, the Moabites, and Edomites, who bordered upon the Jews. See chap. xxvii. 3. xlvi. and xlix.

Ver. 16. *Then shall they be built, &c.]* We have here a clear prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles; and though, after the return from Babylon, the Maccabees in particular were zealous to make profelytes to the law of Moses, it is certain that this and other similar promises had their full accomplishment only in the preaching of the Gospel.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prosperity of the wicked has been a great temptation to more than one good man, Psal. lxxiii. Jeremiah is staggered with it, and earnestly desires to be resolved concerning this point.

1. He presumes to plead with God, and talk with him of his judgment; desiring to obtain information, and have his own doubts silenced, fully persuaded that God is righteous, though he sees mysterious providences which he cannot solve. *Note;* (1.) Though we may not find fault with God's dispensations, we may reason with him upon them, and inquire into the grounds of them, for our greater satisfaction. (2.) Though there may be dark providences which we cannot understand, we must never quit this great and general truth, that *God is righteous*, and whatever he doth is well done.

2. The particular subject of his inquiry is, the prosperity of the wicked. *Their way prospers*, their malicious designs take effect, their treachery and hypocrisy meet with success, and they are happy to outward appearance; living at ease, and enjoying every earthly good. *Thou hast planted them*, as if they were God's peculiar care; *yea, they have taken root; they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit*; their families increase, their wealth accumulates, and they seem fixed in their possessions; *thou art near in their mouth*, they make a profession of godliness, and have the Lord's name often in their lips; but, notwithstanding, he is *far from their reins*, they have no real inward faith, fear, or love of him. *Note;* (1.) Worldly prosperity is here frequently the lot of God's enemies, who in their life-time receive their good things. (2.) The language of piety is easily learnt; but God trieth the



swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people.

17 But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD.

the reins, and requireth truth in the inward parts; without which, all besides is but sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.

3. God knew his simplicity as well as their hypocrisy, that his heart was right towards him; and that in all the trials he had been exposed to, he had approved his fidelity. *Note;* (1.) It is happy for us when we can appeal to God for our uprightness before him. (2.) God's judgment concerning us is not taken from our outward appearance, but from our hearts; *keep, therefore, thy heart with all diligence.* (3.) We may sit easy under men's revilings, if we are conscious of God's approbation of us.

4. He desires to see the ruin of these wicked ones; that, as fattened for slaughter, God would pull them out, and rid the land of that burden under which it groaned. For their wickedness, the famine devoured, and even the beasts and birds perished for want of sustenance, *because they said He shall not see our last end;* either God, whose judgments they despised, or Jeremiah, whose prophecy they despised, and whom they resolved to put to death, that he at least should not live to see the fulfilment of the threatenings which he denounced against them. *Note;* (1.) Prosperous sinners are only as the ox fattened for the slaughter. (2.) The earth groans under men's iniquities, but it shall shortly be relieved in their destruction.

5. God answers his complaints; not indeed in a direct explication of his dispensations, but in an admonition designed for his own profiting. *If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?* If thou canst not find out the devices of the men of Anathoth, how shouldst thou fathom the secrets of God's providence? so some interpret it: or rather, if these conflicts with the men of Anathoth discouraged him, how would he be able to cope with the king, princes, and priests at Jerusalem? *and if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst,* in his own city, where he promised himself peace and safety, *they have wearied thee;* made such an impression on his spirits; *how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?* when a flood of greater persecution shall burst forth upon him, and threaten to overwhelm him. *For even thy brethren, the priests, the house of thy father,* to whom by blood he was so nearly connected; *even they have dealt treacherously with thee,* seeking to silence or destroy him: *yea, they have called a multitude after thee,* raised a mob against him, and instigated them to insult and hoot him as he passed; *believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee;* they pretend to abhor persecution, and to discountenance such riotous proceedings, when in fact they are at the bottom of them; and when their words are smoother than oil, they have hearts full of rancorous enmity. *Note;* (1.) They who stand up for God and his truth, must prepare themselves for the world's opposition. (2.) Our bitterest enemies are often our nearest kinsmen, or our brethren in office. (3.) God prepares his servants by lesser trials for greater ones. (4.) In our own strength the least

temptation will weary us; in God's strength, we shall be enabled to stem the swelling of Jordan.

2dly, We have,

1. God's dereliction of his people. His temple he deserts, his heritage he forsakes, the dearly-beloved of his soul he gives up into the hands of his enemies. Once they bore these favoured titles, God delighted in them, separated them for himself, and chose them for a peculiar people, setting his love upon them; but their ingratitude drove him from them, and left them an easy prey to every invader. The people of his heritage were as lions in the forest, roaring against God in the persons of his prophets, blaspheming his name, and renouncing his government, and become cruel, blood-thirsty, and oppressive; *therefore have I hated it;* withdrawn every token of favour from them, and devoted them to destruction. *Note;* Woe unto the soul, to the people from whom God departs; they are on the verge of ruin!

2. Their destruction by the Chaldeans. *Come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour;* the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, fierce and savage, are summoned to take the field, and consume this devoted people, *Rev. xix. 17, 18.* and no sooner is it spoken than done. *Many pastors, the captains of the Chaldean host, have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness:* once God regarded this place and people as his own, and delighted in it as his portion; but now universal desolation reigns, the country is turned into a wilderness, the cities sacked, burnt, and rased from their foundations, the sword devours from one end of the land to the other: and while this impenitent people lay not their sins to heart, the very earth mourns as more deeply affected than they, upbraiding their ingratitude and hardness of heart; and all attempts to extricate themselves are vain. It is the sword of the Lord, and therefore *no flesh shall have peace;* though they sow wheat, they shall reap thorns; literally, a curse being upon the ground for their sins; and figuratively, though they contrived to engage the Egyptians as their auxiliaries, they would prove a vexation to them, rather than assistance. Their pains are spent to no profit; and shame and confusion will cover them, when they see all their schemes disappointed, and their revenues, so lavishly spent to hire foreign aid, thrown away, *because of the fierce anger of the Lord;* against which all their policy and power were equally fruitless, and which was infinitely more to be feared than even the Chaldean army. *Note;* (1.) If we have God for our enemy, we can hope for no peace in time or eternity. (2.) Nothing can engage sinners to lay to heart the evil of their ways, when God withdraws his Spirit from them; even the heaviest judgments then but harden and exasperate. (3.) If God spared not his own pleasant portion or land, let no other guilty land hope to escape.

3dly, Jeremiah's commission extended not merely to his own people, but to the neighbouring nations.

1. God threatens them with destruction for their unkindness



## C H A P. XIII.

*In the type of a linen girdle, hidden at Euphrates, God prefigureth the destruction of his people. Under the parable of bottles filled with wine, he foretelleth their drunkenness in misery: he exhorteth to prevent their future judgments: he sheweth that their abominations are the cause thereof.*

[Before Christ 602.]

**T**HUS saith the LORD unto me, Go, and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water.

2 So I got a girdle, according to the word of the LORD, and put it on my loins.

3 And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying,

4 Take the girdle that thou hast got, which

is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock.

5 So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me.

6 And it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there.

7 Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it: and behold the girdle was marred; it was profitable for nothing.

8 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

9 Thus saith the LORD, After this manner

kindness to Israel. They are called his *evil neighbours*, such as the Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, &c. by their connexions with whom God's people had been led into sin and idolatry, and that is the greatest evil which any can do; *that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit*, made inroads upon them, assisted the Chaldeans to destroy them, and led away many captives: for this God will visit them. *Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, they too shall be utterly wasted and destroyed; and pluck out the house of Judah from among them; who, when their ruin came, would be released, and escape from their captivity.* *Note;* (1.) It is a dangerous and irksome state to dwell in the midst of *evil neighbours*. (2.) They who have been our tempters, are often made our tormentors. (3.) If judgment begin at the house of God, let not the ungodly and the sinner think of escaping.

2. God still appears ready to have compassion on them, notwithstanding his judgments against them. Though cast out and captives, he *will bring them again every man to his heritage, and every man to his land*; on this condition, that, forsaking their former idolatries, they *diligently learn the ways of my people*, to worship and serve the true God, *to swear by my name, The Lord liveth*, and renounce all idols; in opposition to their former wicked conduct, when *they taught my people to swear by Baal*; then, not only shall their captivity be turned, but *they shall be built in the midst of my people*, become intitled to all the blessings and benefits of native Israelites, united with them in love, and admitted to the worship and service of God's temple. And this seems to look farther than to the conversion of many to the Jewish religion, who returned with them from Babylon; and had eminently its accomplishment when the Gentiles were gathered into the church, made fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel; but shall have its complete fulfilment, when Jews and Gentiles become, without distinction, one fold under one shepherd. *Note;* (1.) The bitterest enemies of God and his people may yet be reconciled; there is ever hope for the returning sinner. (2.) They who learn the ways of God's people will have their happy lot with them. (3.) They who would be proficient

in the school of Christ must use all diligence; sloth and ignorance are inseparable.

3. Judgment is denounced on those who refused to obey the Gospel, and return to God. *I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord.* *Note;* There is but one alternative; either we must turn to God, and be made happy in everlasting blessedness; or by departing from God, and continuing impenitent, go down into everlasting burnings.

## C H A P. XIII.

*Ver. 1. Go, and get thee a linen girdle]* The prophet here begins a new discourse. He himself gives us an explanation of the meaning of the symbolical action here related. See the note on ch. i. 11. He is commanded not to put the girdle into water, to clean it, in order to signify that the people of Israel had contracted such spots by their idolatry, as would not be washed away.

*Ver. 4. Go to Euphrates]* Many commentators have doubted respecting this particular, and have not thought it possible that the prophet should thus have gone backwards and forwards to the banks of the Euphrates; accordingly they have given different interpretations of the word. Bochart supposes that *Euphrata* is meant; and all the difficulty, says Houbigant, will be removed, if you read it, *פרת* *pherath*, according to the Hebrew, thereby understanding some neighbouring place, where Jeremiah might commodiously hide his girdle, and bring it back again at the command of the Lord. See Boch. in Phaleg. Dissert. *de Transportatione Jesu Christi in Montem*, p. 954. But I apprehend there is no reason to take these symbolical actions in the letter. Many of them unquestionably passed in vision; and it is most probable, that the present was of this sort. In this view the parable loses none of its force; and we may then with propriety understand the *Euphrates* to be literally meant, which certainly best agrees with the parable, and is significative of the nation to which this apostate people was to be carried captive. See Dr. Waterland's Script. Vind. part. iii. p. 72.

*Ver. 9. After this manner will I mar the pride, &c.] Will I mar the glory of Judah, and the great honour of Jerusalem.*

will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.

10 This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.

11 For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

12 ¶ Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word; Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine: and they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine?

13 Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness;

14 And I will dash them one against ano-

ther, even the fathers, and the sons together, saith the LORD: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.

15 ¶ Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken.

16 Give glory to the LORD your God; before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.

17 But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock is carried away captive.

18 Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down: for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory.

19 The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open them: Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried away captive.

20 Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north: where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock.

21 What wilt thou say when he shall punish

Jerusalem. See ver. 11. "I will transport them beyond Euphrates; I will hide them in Babylon, as in the hole of a rock, whence they cannot come out. They shall be marred in the midst of the nations, without temple, without sacrifice, without priests, without external worship. I will humble their presumption, and teach them to acknowledge and adore my mercy."

Ver. 11. *So have I caused*] *So had I caused.*

Ver. 12. *Every bottle shall be filled with wine*] The 13th and 14th verses fully explain this. We have before had occasion to observe, that it is frequent in the language of Scripture to express God's judgments under the figures of wine, a cup, drunkenness, &c. Accordingly God here declares, that as they have all sinned, so every one shall have his share in the punishment. See Isai. xxix. 9. li. 21. Jer. xxv. 27. li. 7. Lament. iv. 21.

Ver. 16. *Give glory to the Lord*] That is to say, "Confess your faults, and humble yourselves under his mighty hand, before he bring upon you the night of affliction; before the time come, when ye shall be forced to fly by night unto the mountains for fear of the enemy." See Calmet.

*The dark mountains*] *The mountains of gloominess.* By *הַרֵי נֶשֶׁבֶת* *harei nasebeth*, I imagine those caverns and holes in the mountains are meant, which the Jews were wont to make use of for burying-places; the gloomy shade of

which probably gave rise to that expression which we meet with both here and elsewhere, "the shadow of death." The prophet Isaiah makes use of much the same images, Isa. lix. 9, 10.

Ver. 17. *But if ye will not hear it*] The prophet declares, that after having done all he could to cause the people to return to their duty, without success, nothing farther would remain for him, but to lay aside his public character, and secretly bewail their obstinacy and contempt of God's word.

Ver. 18. *Say unto the king, and to the queen*] That is, to Joachin and his mother, who were carried captives into Babylon at the first coming of Nebuchadnezzar. See 2 Kings, xxiv. 15. Others suppose that Zedekiah and his mother are addressed. We may read the latter clause, *For the crown of your glory is fallen, or shall fall from your heads.*

Ver. 19. *The cities of the south shall be shut up*] "The cities in the southern parts of Judæa shall be shut up, because there shall be no inhabitants. All the lot of Judah, heretofore so beautiful, so well-peopled, so full of fine cities, shall be desolate." Some understand this of Egypt, which lay to the south of Judæa, and which was to be shut against, and to afford the Jews no succour. But the first interpretation seems the best, and most agreeable to the context. See Calmet.

thee? for thou hast taught them *to be* captains, and as chief over thee: shall not sorrows take thee, as a woman in travail?

22 ¶ And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare.

23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

24 Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness.

25 This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the LORD; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood.

26 Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear.

27 I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and

*Ver. 20. Lift up your eyes, &c.]* “Ye people of Judah, behold and reconnoitre the Chaldean army, coming against you from the north.” The next words are addressed to the king and queen; see ver. 18. He represents them under the idea of a shepherd, and the people under that of a flock. “What will you say when the Lord shall demand of you an account of the people committed to your trust? What will you answer, when the sovereign monarch shall see dissipated, diminished, weakened, destroyed, *thy beautiful flock, or flock of thy glory?*” which is explained by Prov. xiv. 28.

*Ver. 21. For thou hast taught them, &c.]* Houbigant renders it, *Since thou hast made them expert against thee, and hast drawn them upon thine own head.* “Thou hast frequently called them to thy succour, and taught them the way to thy country, whereof they dreamed not before; and not only thus, but by accumulating crimes upon crimes, and filling up the measure of thine iniquity, thou hast drawn down the vengeance of heaven, and put thyself in the power of the Chaldeans.” See Calmet.

*Ver. 22. Thy skirts discovered, &c.]* See Isai. xx. 4. and xlvii. 2, 3. Houbigant reads, *And thy heels galled [with irons.]*

*Ver. 23. Can the Ethiopian, &c.]* Jeremiah does not mean hereby to express the absolute impossibility of a moral change; such as that in nature, whereof he speaks. To suppose this, would be to contradict the whole tenor of his writings, and to render insignificant and absurd all his invitations to repentance. Nay, it appears from the last verse of this very chapter, that he did not suppose the reformation of this people an absolute impossibility. We are, therefore, to understand this as a proverbial expression, which, like many others in Scripture, is not to be taken in the strictness of the letter; the prophet designing only to express the extreme difficulty of a moral change in habitual sinners, and particularly in these presumptuous and obstinate sinners of Israel, to whom his discourse is directed. Archbishop Tillotson remarks, “That this expression, *Can the Ethiopian, &c.* is much to be mitigated, will appear, by considering some other like passages of Scripture; as where our Saviour compares the difficulty of a rich man’s salvation, to that which is naturally impossible,—to a camel’s passing through the eye of a needle: nay, he pitches his expression higher, and doth not only make it a thing of equal, but of greater difficulty: *I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* And yet, when he comes to

“explain this to his disciples, he tells them, that he only meant that the thing was very difficult; *How hard is it for those that have riches to be saved!* And in another place,—*For those that trust in riches, and that it was not impossible:* but, speaking according to human probability, *with men this is impossible, but not with God.* In like manner we are to understand this high expression, which is very hyperbolic,—*Can the Ethiopian, &c.* that is to say, This moral change of men, settled and fixed in bad habits, is very difficult, though, as the Archbishop goes on to shew, there is still ground to hope that it may be done. And when we consider the Christian religion, and the power of divine grace, there is all the reason in the world to believe that it will be done, when we heartily set about it, and use every necessary and proper endeavour. See his Sermons, vol. ii. p. 166.

*Ver. 24. By the wind of the wilderness]* “The most vehement storms to which Judæa was subject came from the great desert country to the south of it.” See Bishop Lowth’s Note on Isai. xxi. 1.

*Ver. 27. Woe unto thee, &c.]* The prophet here expresses in the strongest manner his hopes and his desires for the repentance and reformation of this people. The original is remarkably emphatical, אַחֲרַי מַתַּי אֶד, *acharei mathai od, when once?* The apophysis is peculiarly beautiful and expressive.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, They who stopped their ears against the prophet’s words, have now a sign before their eyes, if any means might be found to fasten conviction upon their hearts. We have,

1. The sign. *A linen girdle, or sash, which the prophet is commanded to procure and wear; and which would be the more taken notice of, as his rough garments were unused to be bound with such finery. No water must touch it; but when worn awhile, he must go to the river Euphrates, and hide it in a hole in the rock, where, by the rising and falling of the river, it would become wet and dry, and rot the sooner. After a while he is sent to fetch it thence, and found it spoiled and rotten. Interpreters are divided concerning this matter, whether it was only done in vision, as Ezek. viii. 3. xi. 24. or real. The former seems more generally received, because of the length of the way, and the time required to be spent in the journey, when his presence at home was so necessary.*

2. The explanation. God had chosen Israel, and *caused them to cleave unto him, as a girdle about the loins of a man; intimating how near and dear they were to him, brought into*

thine abominations on the hills in the fields. be made clean? when shall it once be?  
 Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not

into a state of most intimate communion with him, permitted to enter into the courts of his house, favoured with his presence, and engaged by innumerable favours to cleave to him in all fidelity and love, that they might be to him for a people, a peculiar people; for a name renowned in the earth, and to shew forth his praise and glory; and thus, like the curious girdle of the ephod, be ornamental to their profession, and an honour to their holy religion. *But they would not hear;* and therefore he threatens to mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem, especially elated with having the temple in the midst of her; but the higher their pride rose, the lower shall their fall be. Since they had corrupted their ways by wickedness, and refused to hear the words of God's prophets, following their own vain imaginations, and sunk into abominable idolatries, God will utterly consume them, and make them vile as that girdle of rags. *Note;* (1.) The greater the mercies are that we enjoy, the greater are our obligations to be faithful. (2.) God's service is the highest honour; and while we are most solicitous to glorify him, we at the same time gain for ourselves that great name which is worth our ambition. (3.) It is folly to pretend a relation to God as his people, if we are not to him for a praise. (4.) Whatever we are proud of, whether parts, gifts, station, wealth, or power, God regards such self-complacence with abhorrence; and what turned angels into devils, will make men who imitate their sins companions in their sufferings.

2dly, We have,

1. Another judgment threatened, under the figure of bottles filled with wine. They were filled with drunkenness, and they shall be filled with wrath: not understanding the prophet's meaning, they seem to ridicule it; *Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine;* this is not such a strange thing that it need be ushered in with such pomp, as thus saith the Lord God of Israel; but let them wait the explanation, and it will be found momentous; for God threatens to fill all the inhabitants of the land, king, priests, prophets, and people, high and low, with drunkenness, with a spirit of insatiation, which will have the same effect upon them as wine; their counsels shall be confounded, they shall stagger, be weak as a drunken man, and be made sick with smiting; dashed one against another with intestine quarrels, they shall help forward their own ruin, even the fathers and the sons together; *I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them with an utter destruction.* *Note;* Drunkards are chief among those whose damnation slumbereth not.

2. An admonition given them of God, to humble themselves before it was too late. *Be not proud,* above being taught, or too stubborn to bend to reproof. Yea, the king and queen are called upon to set their subjects the example, and to sit down in the dust; and there, confessing their sins, and acknowledging the justice of their sufferings, to give glory to God before he come forth in judgment, and cause darkness, giving them up to the Babylonish captivity; and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, or the mountains of gloominess; referring to the afflictions which they should suffer; and while ye look for light, a gleam of pro-

sperty, and assistance from their confederates, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness, overwhelming them with their calamities and disappointments, and sinking them in despair. For, unless they prevented their doom by a timely repentance, it is determined that your principalities shall come down, all the power and dignity in which they prided themselves and confided, even the crown of your glory, plucked from the king's head with all the ensigns of royalty, and he, among the rest, led into an inglorious captivity. *Note;* (1.) They who are too proud to bend, are not too high to be broken. (2.) If sinners will not give God glory by their penitence, he will glorify himself in their perdition. (3.) There is no escaping God's judgments by attempting to fly from them; the only door of hope is in humiliation to fly to him. (4.) The vain hopes of sinners will serve but to aggravate their misery, and to increase their confusion. (5.) It becomes those who are most exalted to set the gracious example; kings are not too great to sit in the dust, when God calls to weeping and mourning for the sins of the land.

3. The prophet expresses the unspeakable grief that it would give him to see them reject the divine admonitions. *If ye will not hear it, and obey, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride;* to some lonely solitude he would retire, and pour out his griefs before God, since it was vain to expostulate with them. That pride and stubbornness of which they would not repent, he with tears would bewail, and weep sore for those desolations which they would not believe, nor seek to avert, because the Lord's flock, for such they had once been, is carried away captive; and hereby God would be dishonoured and blasphemed, which especially affected the prophet's heart. *Note;* (1.) They who know the terrors of the Lord themselves, cannot but tremble for those who appear insensible of their danger. (2.) The sins of their people cause many an aching heart to God's ministers, and they mourn exceedingly over those whom they cannot reform.

4. Their ruin was inevitable. Their cities (which lay south of Babylon) shall be shut up, either besieged, or left without inhabitant, and their captivity be complete. In Jehoiakim's time some were carried away, but in Zedekiah's none shall be left. The terrible army of invaders is already in view, coming from the north. *Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?* once so distinguished with every mark of God's favour and regard, and the glory of the whole earth, now dispersed and scattered, and their place is no more found. *What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?* how speechless would they be found before God, when by the Chaldean sword he should arise to visit their iniquities? for thou hast taught them to be captains, and as chief over thee; having invited them into their country formerly, and thereby opened a door for their conquests, 2 Kings, xvi. 7. *Shall not sorrows take thee as a woman in travail?* sorrows, sudden, terrible, and unavoidable, would then seize on this devoted Judæa. *Note;* (1.) They who have the charge of others committed to them, parents, magistrates, and especially ministers, should often think of the solemn account which they must

## C H A P. XIV.

*The grievous famine causeth Jeremiah to pray. The Lord will not be entreated for the people. Lying prophets are no excuse for them. Jeremiah is moved to complain for them.*

[Before Christ 601.]

**T**HE word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth.

2 Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.

3 And their nobles have sent their little

one day give before the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls. (2.) They who have rejected God's admonitions will be speechless in the day of their visitation.

3dly, It is here foretold, as before, that captivity awaited them, when naked and barefoot they should be led away, confounded and ashamed before their conquerors. In this miserable case,

1. They are represented as inquiring into the cause of their calamities: *If thou say in thine heart, for God knows what passeth there, Wherefore come these things upon me?* either quarrelling with their afflictions and fretting against the Lord, or driven by the severity of their sufferings penitently to inquire into their cause.

2. God answers them, *For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare.* God had not laid on them more than they had deserved; for their iniquities were great and numberless, and they utterly incorrigible: the black *Ethiopian* as soon might change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as they be reclaimed from their abominations, which habit and custom had ingrained, and made a second nature; or learn that good which their prophets inculcated. God had been forgotten by them, and their confidence placed on *falsehood*, the broken reed of Egyptian aid. Their idolatries and adulteries had been multiplied on every hill, in every field, openly and without a blush; therefore they might easily perceive the cause of their ruin. *Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem:* for these things they are scattered as stubble before the wind of the wilderness, the Chaldean army; and this is their lot, and the portion assigned them of God, in just judgment for such impieties and impenitence. *Note;* (1.) God never lays upon sinners more than they deserve, but in all his judgments will be justified. (2.) Every man by nature is born like the sooty Ethiopian, black in original sin; and by practice and habit the stain is still deeper fixed in the soul. Not all the waters of the ocean can change the hue; no labours or attempts of man to cleanse himself by natural means are of any avail; the fountain of a Redeemer's blood alone can wash this Ethiopian white, and change this leopard's spots. (3.) Inveterate habits are very difficult to be conquered; but if we sincerely seek for divine grace, we shall find it all-sufficient.

3. The prophet expostulates once more with them; dangerous as their case was, it might not be yet utterly desperate; *wilt thou not be made clean?* shall no intreaty

ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.

4 Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.

5 Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass.

6 And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because *there was* no grass.

prevail, when the fountain is yet open, and God's patience waits; *when shall it once be?* surely it was now high time to bethink themselves, when ruin was almost at the door. *Note;* (1.) The reason why sinners perish is, because they will not come to Christ that they may have life. (2.) We must be made clean, or we can never enter God's holy place in heaven. (3.) God waits long upon sinners, and expostulates with them on their delays; and they who disappoint his patience will be left without excuse. (4.) Most men resolve sometime or other to repent; but, putting it off to a distant day, death surprises them in their sins.

## C H A P. XIV.

*Ver. 1. The word of the Lord—concerning the dearth]* *The drought.* Taylor observes, that the chapters of this prophet, from iii. to xxi. lie in regular order as to time. There is a date, chap. iii. 6. *In the days of Josiah*, without mentioning the year of his reign, which, however, shews that that chapter was delivered in some part of his reign; and whereas a severe drought is mentioned in several of these chapters, this shews that they are to be laid together in the same year or years in which the drought continued; all the rest to the 21st may follow in order of time, and all might be delivered in the last years of king Josiah. See Dr. Lightfoot, and Taylor's Script. Div. p. 341. Houbigant is of opinion, that this drought happened at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, before the Chaldeans besieged Jerusalem.

*Ver. 2. Judah mourneth]* The prophet represents Jerusalem as a mother who has lost her children, and who is oppressed with grief. The gates are put for the city. Instead of, *Its gates languish*, &c. Houbigant reads, *Its crops fall down and grow black upon the earth.*

*Ver. 3. Little ones to the waters, &c.]* *Their younger ones for water.*

*Ver. 6. The wild asses, &c.]* *The wild asses stood upon the cliffs.* These animals are said to stand on the high places or cliffs, because in that situation the current of air is stronger and cooler than in lower places; and for the same reason it is that they are said to *snuff up the air like dragons*, because they are reputed to delight in cool places. The LXX. omit the words *like dragons*. *Ælian* tells us, that the *dragons*, which are a sort of large serpents, hold their heads up during a certain space of time every day to suck

in

7 ¶ O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou *it* for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.

8 O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man, *that* turneth aside to tarry for a night?

9 Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man *that* cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, *art* in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

10 ¶ Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.

11 Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for *their* good.

12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt-offering and an oblation, I will not accept them; but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.

13 ¶ Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.

14 Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, *neither* have I commanded them, *neither*

spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision, and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

15 Therefore, thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.

16 And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.

17 ¶ Therefore, thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.

18 If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.

19 Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and *there is* no healing for us? we looked for peace, and *there is* no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!

in the air, and by this means reach the birds which fly near them. See *Ælian. Nat. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 19.* Ludolf thinks that the crocodiles are here meant, which frequently raise their heads above the water to breathe, as do many other amphibious creatures. There is a passage in Virgil very similar to this of Jeremiah:

— *Bucula cælum,  
Suspiciens, patulis captavit naribus auram.*

The heifer, tossing high her head in air,  
With broader nostrils snuffs the gale afar.

Georg. i. 375. WARTON.

*Ver. 7. Do thou it for thy name's sake.] Do thou act with a regard to thine own name.* That is, deal not with us according to our deserving, but so as not to give occasion to strangers to speak evil of thy name, to question thy power, wisdom, or goodness. So God says, *Ezek. xx. 9. 14. 22. 44.* that amidst the various provocations he had received, he had still acted uniformly upon this principle.

*Ver. 8. As a stranger in the land.] Strangers* are supposed to ransack and plunder a land of its riches; and a way-

*faring-man, or traveller,* to have little or no regard for it. The prophet's meaning therefore is, that the Lord seemed to have as little regard for Judah, as a hostile stranger, who would endeavour to ruin it; or as a traveller, for the place where he lodged only one night, without expecting ever to see it again. The opposition is between God, who had his dwelling in the midst of Judæa in the temple, and a passing traveller. See Calmet and Houbigant.

*Ver. 9. Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished.] Why shouldest thou be as a man void of counsel?* Houbigant.

*Ver. 10. Thus saith the Lord unto, &c.] Thus saith the Lord concerning this people. They altogether love to wander, &c.* Houbigant. God here returns an answer to the complaints and expostulations of the prophet, and tells him, that the miseries of the people are owing to themselves; ever turbulent and unquiet as they were, fond of novelty, forsaking God for the worship of idols, and despising the divine succour, to run after that of strangers.

*Ver. 18. The prophet and the priest go about, &c.] Jeremiah* is here manifestly describing what he saw when he entered the city; namely, men sick and worn out with famine;



20 We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, *and* the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.

21 Do not abhor *us*, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.

famine; and among these even the *priests* and the *prophets*, panting on the ground, half dead, and not able to distinguish anybody. See Pl. xxxviii. 11. And in this view the passage should be rendered, *Yea, both the prophet and the priest lie panting on the ground, nor do they know any one.* This is Houbigant's interpretation, which seems in every respect agreeable to the context. Others, however, understand it according to our translation, of the captivity of the priests and prophets, who were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar.

*Ver. 21. Do not abhor, &c.] Do not reject, for thy name's sake,—do not, &c.* By the *throne of God's glory*, is here principally to be understood the temple; and Jeremiah beseeches God not to give up that sacred structure, with the holy city, to be profaned by infidelity; the place which he had chosen for his peculiar residence, and where he sat between the cherubims as upon a throne. See Lowth and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The dearth here at large described, had been before intimated. It was the beginning of sorrows, and a call to them by repentance to prevent the greater judgments in store. We have here,

1. A most affecting description, which God gives the prophet, of the distress which this visitation would bring upon the land. The voice of bitter mourning and the cry of anguish are heard throughout Judah and Jerusalem. The very *gates languish*, deserted by those who used to sit in them, and every face gathers blackness, pining with famine, and bowed to the ground with weakness and despair. The nobles, as well as people, are involved in the calamity: in vain their servants search for water; the heavens give no showers, the rivers are dry; they return with their vessels empty, and, with their masters, are overwhelmed with grief and shame at the disappointment. Parched up for want of rain, the earth cleaves in wide fissures, impenetrable to the plough, and leaves the husbandman confounded under the affliction. The very beasts suffer: the loving hind, now grown unnatural, abandons her young for want of nourishment to supply them; the wild asses on the mountains' top, scorched with the heat, pant for breath, and snuff the wind; and *their eyes fail*, famished, *because there is no grass.* *Note;* (1.) The common blessings of life are usually disregarded: yet, if God *stays the bottles of heaven*, we shall quickly find a drop of water more valuable than mountains of gold. (2.) They who take no shame for their sins justly provoke God to confound them with disappointments. (3.) Many mourn over their miseries, who shed no tears over the guilt which provokes them.

2. The prophet addresses his importunate prayer to God in this their wretched situation, and herein sets them an example to pray for themselves, and in what manner.

[1.] He begins with deep and humbling acknowledgments of their guilt and sinfulness. *O Lord, our iniquities testify against us*; too great to be palliated or excused, too public to be denied; *for our backslidings are many*; *we have sinned against thee*; in open violation of thy law, and in

opposition to all the methods of thy grace; for which they stand convicted before God, and own the justice of his judgments. *Note;* True penitents are liberal in self-accusation, and never desire to cover their sins, but to confess them in all their malignity.

[2.] He pleads earnestly for mercy, *though he acknowledges that they deserve punishment: do thou it for thy name's sake*, this being the sinner's prevailing plea; not his own deserts, but that God would glorify the riches of his grace and power in the salvation of the unworthy.

[3.] He fills his mouth with arguments, to enforce his petition, drawn from their relation to God, and his glory concerned in their sufferings: *O the hope of Israel, their only hope*, who had in time past saved them, notwithstanding their provocations, and to whose endless mercy they had still recourse: *the saviour thereof in time of trouble*; who had often heard and answered their cries and prayers in the day of their distress, and in whom they trusted that he would yet deliver them: *why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land?* an unconcerned spectator of their miseries, as not interested in them; *and as a way-faring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night?* lodging at an inn, and departing without the least connexion formed with the people. *Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save?* for such reflections would be cast upon him by the Heathen, if he suffered his own people to become a prey to their enemies, as if he wanted wisdom or power to deliver them. *Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us*, no stranger among them, but had long dwelt in the temple at Jerusalem, and therefore he begs that it may not now be forsaken; *and we are called by thy name*; in profession, in outward covenant, the people of God; *leave us not*, for this is the consummation of all misery; to be deserted by him is to be irrecoverably lost and undone. *Note;* (1.) The most powerful arguments are those drawn from God's own glory. (2.) They who fly to God, as their only hope and Saviour in their deepest distress, shall not perish. (3.) If God seem to disregard our afflictions, we have only ourselves to blame for provoking him to leave us.

2dly, If aught could have prevailed to obtain pardon or respite, it had been this intercession; but we find it in vain.

1. God forbids him to pray for what he cannot grant; and he will not have the precious breath of prayer wasted. The measure of their iniquities was full, their sentence passed. *They have loved to wander*, have taken delight in sin, and, notwithstanding the repeated warnings, *they have not refrained their feet*, but continued to that hour obstinately impenitent; *therefore the Lord doth not accept them*: indeed it was impossible that he should: *he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins*, to punish them. In vain they fasted, prayed, sacrificed; their services were hypocritical, and, while their iniquities were not put away, so far from being acceptable, they were an abomination. Devoted, therefore, to destruction, he threatens, *I will consume*



22 Are there *any* among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? *art* not thou he, O LORD

our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these *things*.

*consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence, his three sore judgments.* *Note;* (1.) While men continue determinately bent in the ways of sin, nothing can prevent their approaching ruin. (2.) They who bring down God's wrath on their heads by their iniquities, will not be able to cast their destruction on any fatal necessity which they were under, but owe it to their own choice; *they have loved to wander.* (3.) All formal duties and devotions are but hypocrisy and a provocation, when offered by an unawakened heart.

2. The prophet, reluctant utterly to abandon his people, suggests that they had been deluded by the fair promises and confident assertions of the false prophets: a poor excuse, it must be owned, when they had before warning of their danger, and rules to judge them by; but it was the best apology that he could make for them, and therefore he pleads it in their behalf. *Note;* When a case is really bad, charity will teach us to make the best of it.

3. God over-rules his plea. He disclaims all those prophets who pretended a commission from him which he never gave. Their divination is false, *a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart,* groundless, worthless, and delusive, as will quickly appear when the judgments of God shall begin with them; and that sword and famine, which they so confidently pronounced would never come, shall consume those lying prophets themselves. And those who have been deceived by them must perish with them by sword and famine, together with their wives, their sons and their daughters, and their corpses lie unburied in the streets of Jerusalem; God being determined to bring the punishment of their wickedness in full measure upon them. *Note;* (1.) They who flatter to their ruin shall themselves receive the greater damnation. (2.) It will be no excuse for the deceived that they followed those who pretended a mission from God, when they have their Bibles, and some few faithful ministers who warn them of their delusions. (3.) When sinners suffer, they may look upon their wickedness as the cause of it. And when the deceived and deceiver lie down in hell together, they will prove but miserable comforters to each other.

3dly, The desolations of Judah affect the prophet's heart, and he is permitted to lament them; and, though discouraged from prayer, he does not esteem it an absolute prohibition; therefore once more he intercedes in behalf of this guilty people.

1. He weeps, with ceaseless sorrow, over the dreadful calamities of his people, and God enjoins him to inform them of the cause of his tears, if peradventure it might affect their hearts with some apprehension of their impending miseries. Wherever he went, nothing but horrid scenes of devastation presented themselves to his view. Without, the Chaldean sword strewed the ground with the corpses of the slain; within the city famine raged, and every where the dying groans were heard of those who perished for want of food; and both the priest and prophet, those who had been the deceivers of the people, are

sharers in their sufferings, dragged captives into a strange land, or wandering as vagabonds. But others understand this of the true prophets, such as Ezekiel and Daniel, who were carried into Babylon with the rest, and which would excite fresh grief, to see the righteous involved with the wicked. *Note;* Though we may not refuse pronouncing the sinner's doom, it should appear that we desire not the woeful day; and they, who will not hear our warnings, should see our weeping over their lost souls.

2. Once more, he cannot keep silence: he pours out his prayer, if there be but the *peradventure* of hope.

[1.] He humbly expostulates. *Hast thou utterly rejected Judah?* that once-favoured family, that stock from which Shiloh comes; *hast thy soul leathed Zion?* that once loved name, where God delighted to dwell: *why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us?* not merely with the rod of affliction, but with the sword of judgment, whose wound is incurable. Far other expectations had they entertained: *we looked for peace;* such was their fond hope, and so had their prophets flattered them; *and there is no good;* their affairs went from evil to worse: and *for the time of healing,* after the heavy chastisement which they had endured; *and behold trouble,* without prospect of its end or abatement. But will God be no more entreated?

[2.] He confesses that they deserve all, and more than all that they have yet endured. *We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness,* that it is great and aggravated, *and the iniquity of our fathers,* whose example they imitated, and filled the measure of their iniquities; *for we have sinned against thee,* and justly provoked his wrath and indignation against them. They own their guilt, and cast themselves on his mercy; which,

3. The prophet, in their behalf, earnestly begs; *Do not abhor us;* if not embraced with the wonted tokens of divine favours, yet let us not be treated with utter detestation, and suffered to be intirely rooted out; *for thy name's sake;* for they have nothing but this to plead; his honour is concerned in their ruin; *do not disgrace the throne of thy glory,* that temple where his honour dwelt; and if this was laid desolate, the heathen would triumph as if their gods were greater than Jehovah, who sat between the cherubims. *Remember, break not thy covenant with us.* Indeed the covenant was broken on their part; but, on their penitent return, they might still plead his promise, and would prove his fidelity. *Note;* (1.) The most prevailing plea in prayer is to be drawn from God's glory, as interested in our salvation. (2.) It is a bitter grief to the pious soul, to see religion disgraced, and God blasphemed. (3.) We must plead God's promises, not as doubting his fidelity to his engagements, but for the encouragement of our own faith.

4. He disclaims all dependence upon idols, and looks to God alone for relief under the present distress by reason of the drought. *Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?* No. All these idols cannot produce one drop of dew. *Or can the heavens give showers?*

K

No.

## C H A P. XV.

*The utter rejection and manifold judgments of the Jews. Jeremiah, complaining of their malice, receiveth a promise for himself, and a threatening for them: he prayeth, and receiveth a gracious promise.*

[Before Christ 601.]

**T**HEN said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.

2 And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity.

3 And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear; and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy.

4 And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem.

5 For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest?

6 Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting.

7 And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people, since they return not from their ways.

8 Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them against the mother of the young men a spoiler at noon-day; I have caused him to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors upon the city.

9 She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day: she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD.

10 ¶ Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury, yet every one of them doth curse me.

No. All second causes can only act according to the will of the first Mover. Therefore they will look from these to Him who alone bindeth up the waters in the thick cloud. *Art not thou he, O Lord our God?* in whom our confidence is placed, and who alone canst open the windows of heaven. *Therefore we will wait upon thee*, till thou art pleased to answer our prayer, and cause the clouds to drop down from above: *for thou hast made all these things*, the heavens and earth, and all that in them is; even the rain hath a father, and the drops of dew are formed by him, and descend at his command. *Note;* (1.) We cannot place too little dependence on the creature, nor too much on the Creator. (2.) They who wait upon God must wait for him; and they who patiently continue so to do, will not be disappointed of their hope.

## C H A P. XV.

*Ver. 1. Then said the Lord, &c.]* This is the answer of the Lord to the fervent prayers of Jeremiah in the last chapter: "If Moses and Samuel," saith he, "could revive, and unite in their intercessions for this people, those two men, my faithful servants, heretofore so prevalent with me, could not change my resolution." Jeremiah may be here considered as in the temple, at the head of an humble people, asking mercy for them. The Lord dismisses them with a severity whereof we have few examples

in Scripture. See Ezek. xiv. 14, 16. By *death*, in the next verse, is meant the mortality occasioned by the drought and dearth; and accordingly we may render it, *Such as are for the mortality, to the mortality.*

*Ver. 7. And I will fan them]* The simile is taken from a man who stands in the gate of his threshing-floor, to separate with his fan the chaff from the wheat; God denouncing that he would cast the people of Judah out of his hand, as the wind scattereth abroad and disperseth the chaff.

*Ver. 8. I have brought upon them, against the mother of the young men, &c.]* Houbigant renders this verse in the future, thus, *Their widows shall be increased to me above the sand of the sea; and upon the mothers, and upon the young men, will I bring down him who spoileth the southern country: I will oppress them with calamity and sudden terror.* We may read the latter part, *Against the mother a young, or chosen man; a spoiler at noon-day: I have drawn down upon her suddenly an enemy and terrors.*

*Ver. 9. Her sun is gone down, &c.]* See Amos, viii. 9. Isai. lix. 9. The expression is extremely strong, and denotes a sudden change from the highest prosperity to the lowest distress.

*Ver. 10. That thou hast borne me a man of strife]* The prophet here complains of the opposition he met with from his countrymen for speaking unwelcome truths, which

11 The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee *well* in the time of evil and in the time of affliction.

12 Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?

13 Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and *that* for all thy sins, even in all thy borders.

14 And I will make *thee* to pass with thine enemies into a land *which* thou knowest not; for a fire is kindled in mine anger, *which* shall burn upon you.

15 ¶ O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy long-suffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.

16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of Hosts.

17 I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation.

18 Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, *which* refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, *and* as waters *that* fail.

19 ¶ Therefore, thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, *and* thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.

20 And I will make thee unto this people

which had occasioned him as much uneasiness, as if he had engaged in the most invidious of all occupations, and the most likely to engender strife, that of lending and borrowing upon usury.

*Ver. 11. Verily it shall be well with thy remnant] Verily I will give thee a happy deliverance. Or, I will bring thee to better things. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 12. Shall iron break the northern iron] Houbigant renders the verse, I will raise up iron from the north, iron and brass; which seems to give the best interpretation of this difficult verse. Others understand it in a different manner, thus: The Lord, to comfort Jeremiah, promises him in the 11th verse, that he will cause his enemies at the end to treat him well: but he adds in this verse, "What do you fear from the Jews? What can they do against you? Though they were as hard as iron or as steel, they cannot hurt you. I will give you the solidity of brass, the force of northern iron: thou shalt be as a brazen wall, against which all their attacks shall be in vain." See ver. 20. and ch. i. 17, 18.*

*Ver. 16. Thy words were found] Thy words were pure and clean, and I have eaten them: thy words were my delight, and my heart is refreshed on this account, because I am called, &c. Houbigant. Jeremiah here declares in what manner he engaged and acquitted himself in his office of prophet. "From the moment that thou didst speak to me, and inspire me with thy Spirit, I opened my mouth, and received thy word greedily, like a man, who, pressed with hunger, finds food which is agreeable to his appetite. "I treasured it in my memory; I meditated upon, and inwardly digested it. I found it my satisfaction, my comfort, my joy."*

*Ver. 18. Wilt thou be altogether, &c.] Wilt thou be altogether unto me as the lying of waters that are not sure? Our translation certainly conveys too harsh an idea, nor is there any reason for it; for the passage may very well be rendered differently. Houbigant renders it, Why is my life*

*unto me as waters which fail and flow away: and others, Thou art become to me a fountain which faileth, and as waters which are not to be trusted. See Isai. lviii. 11. "Thou hast promised to be my defence and protector against all my enemies; and wilt thou altogether disappoint and deceive me; like rivulets, which, being dried up in the summer, disappoint the thirsty traveller?" Instead of incurable, in the former part of the verse, some read, not to be touched; so painful and tender, that it will not bear the touch of the healer. See Dr. Waterland's Script. Vind. part. iii. p. 81.*

*Ver. 19. If thou return, &c.] Houbigant reads, If thou wilt sit still, I will give thee a certain seat: yea, thou shalt stand before me. "Thou shalt not be of the number of those who shall be carried away captive." But the passage seems better explained by the parallel one, Zech. iii. 7. It seems the intention of the Lord to strengthen and encourage Jeremiah in the difficult office wherein he was engaged.*

REFLECTIONS.—Ist, When the measure of a nation's iniquities is full, then vengeance to the uttermost will overtake them, and all intercession for them is vain.

1. The decree is gone forth; terrible, irreversible. The greatest favourites of heaven, the mightiest men in prayer, if they were again upon earth, could avail nothing. They are abandoned to their fate, and doomed to destruction: and if, when their ruin was told them, they should tauntingly say, *Whither shall we go forth?* the answer is ready. According to the divine decree, some should die by the sword, by pestilence, by famine, and their carcases, unburied, be food for dogs and the fowls of heaven, and the remnant go into a miserable captivity; not a friend shall remain to pity their deplorable case, or to testify the least concern for them. God's patience is at an end; his hand stretched out to destroy them without sparing, and they shall be dispersed as chaff before the fan: a spoiler at noon-day, Nebuchadnezzar, with the Chaldean army, shall come

a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I *am* with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

21 And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

come upon them openly, suddenly consume their men of war, increase the number of their widows, and leave the mothers childless, robbed of those darlings which were as the light of their eyes; ashamed, confounded, and deprived of that support on which they trusted: part shall be slain with the famine, and the residue fall by the sword of the enemy, when Jerusalem shall be taken. *Note;* (1.) God's Spirit will not always strive, nor his patience always wait for impenitent sinners: when their day of grace is trifled away, the day of recompence will overtake them. (2.) When the Lord begins, he will make an end. Let us fear to provoke his indignation, lest repentance should come too late.

2. The cause of these judgments is their sins, past and present: for God never smites without cause. Their former iniquities under Manasseh, son of Hezekiah; his idolatry, murders, and abominations, aggravated by the consideration how horribly he had degenerated from his pious father's ways, cried for vengeance; and the measure of the sins of that generation was filled by the impetuosity of the present. They *forsook God*, went *backward*, apostate from his commands and ways and worship; and, notwithstanding all the methods that he had used to reclaim them both by his ministers and his providences, *they returned not from their ways*. And when sinners persist in their wickedness, and refuse to hearken, they may be assured that eternal perdition will be the consequence.

3dly, Jeremiah, returned from his public ministry, in private pours out his complaints unto God.

1. He bewails his unhappy case; persecuted and reviled by his ungrateful countrymen; and this not without some appearance of impatience, as if angry with his mother for having borne him: so hard it is, under great provocations, to keep the heart quiet. He complains that he was a *man of strife*: not contentious in his own spirit; but abused for his faithfulness, and every occasion taken to quarrel with him, though he had not given them the least cause: he had *neither lent on usury*, nor borrowed; had not entangled himself with secular affairs, but given himself up wholly to the work of his ministry; was engaged in no transactions and trade which could give occasion to debate, or afford matter for litigious suits at law: yet they *curst him*; treated him with contempt or with abhorrence, pouring out curses upon him for the fidelity that he shewed in delivering the messages which he received from God. *Note;* (1.) It is too commonly the lot of the faithful ministers of God to meet with the basest usage, and the most ungrateful return for their labours. (2.) The Gospel teaches us to follow peace with all men; yet, through the perverseness of the world, it too often happens, that when we speak to them of peace, they make them ready to battle. (3.) Desirable as it is to live in friendship and quiet with those around us, it must never be purchased by base compliances, or by flattering them in their sins. (4.) Ministers of God must not entangle themselves with the

affairs of this world; the care of men's souls ought wholly to engross their time and thoughts.

2. The Lord in mercy answers him with gracious assurances of his protection: *Verily it shall be well with thy remnant*. The words are in form of an oath, assuring him of God's blessing during the residue of his days: whatever became of the people, he should be preserved. Those very enemies, who were the rod of God's indignation to his countrymen, should shew him kindness and favour, as was fulfilled, chap. xxxix. 11, 12. *Note;* (1.) They who are faithful to God, he will be careful of them. He has in his hands the hearts of all men, and can raise us up friends where we least expected them. (2.) The zealous ministers of God have often found protection from those who shew no concern about religion, when bitterly persecuted by the false professors of it.

3. God threatens his enemies with ruin. *Shall iron break the northern iron?* Either the Jews should not be able to hurt him who had been set as an iron pillar against them; or rather, all their efforts to resist the northern army of the Chaldeans should be useless; their substance and treasures should fall an easy prey; in shameful captivity they should be led to Babylon; and the heavy wrath of God pursue them; and this the just punishment of *their sins*, aggravated and universal in all their borders, the corruption of their manners being general, and spread from one end of the land to the other.

3dly, We have,

1. The prophet's earnest application to God, appealing to him who searcheth the heart for his integrity, and intreating the fulfilment of his promises.

[1.] He prays, *O Lord, thou knowest my innocence, my sufferings, and the malice of my enemies; remember me for good, and visit me with thy salvation, and revenge me of my persecutors*. Perhaps this was his infirmity; or he desired it for God's glory, in whose name he had spoken: *take me not away in thy long-suffering; give me my life for a prey, when they are cut off, or leave me not to their power and malice*. He acknowledges that to the long-suffering of God he must owe it; the best, in the rigour of justice, being obnoxious to God's wrath. *Know, acknowledge and make it evident to my enemies, by thy interposition on my behalf, that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke, because of his fidelity in discharging his office: and when this is really the case, we may confidently expect that God will plead our quarrel, and vindicate our integrity from all the revilings of men*.

[2.] He pleads the diligence that he used in executing his commission, the delight which he took in God's word, and his carefulness to keep himself from every sinful compliance with them. *Thy words were found, and I did eat them*, as a hungry man his food: his ears were attentive to drink in what God delivered to him; he carefully thought over and digested the words in his mind, and his heart feasted upon them: *thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing*

## CHAP. XVI.

*The prophet, under the types of abstaining from marriage, and from houses of mourning and feasting, forebaweth the utter ruin of the Jews, because they were worse than their fathers. Their return from captivity shall be more strange than their deliverance out of Egypt. God will doubly recompense their idolatry.*

[Before Christ 602.]

**T**HE word of the LORD came also unto me, saying,

2 Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place.

3 For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mo-

*joicing of mine heart: either he hoped that the terrible threatenings which he brought would move the people to repentance; or the gracious assurance that God would support him encouraged him; or, above all, amid the dark judgments, the promises of the incarnation of the Messiah, and his great salvation, which mingled therewith, revived and comforted his soul. For I am called by thy name, O Lord God of Hosts, which he delighted in as his greatest honour, though others, perhaps, turned it to his reproach. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, partaking with them in their sins, or by silence conniving at their wickedness; or with them that make merry, levity being inconsistent with the seriousness of his character; and rejoiced not, not even partaking of any lawful recreation, which the dreadful evils that he beheld approaching would not suffer him to taste. I sat alone, meditating on his message, and mourning over the people, because of thy hand, which he saw lighting down upon the nation in vengeance; or because of the spirit of prophecy which he felt; for thou hast filled me with indignation; either the indignation of the people against him, or his displeasure against them for their impenitence, or a sense of the heavy wrath of God ready to overtake them. Note; (1.) The word of God is the sweetest repast to the believer's soul, and thence he derives his most reviving draughts of consolation. (2.) When we have work to do for God, we must not only forsake what is in itself sinful, but forego what to others might be innocent. (3.) There is a holy indignation without sin, when ministers grieve over the hardness of men's hearts.*

[3.] He expostulates with God, it seems, with something of a murmuring spirit: *why is my pain perpetual?* which he suffered for the people's sake in his own mind, or from their ill usage. *Why is my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed?* there appearing no hopes of a change for the better, or any end of their reproaches. *Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?* leaving him in their hands, though he had promised to deliver him, chap. i. 19. and giving his enemies occasion to reproach his confidence? No. God will not suffer him to be thus confounded, nor any that put their trust in him. Therefore,

thers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land;

4 They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried: but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth; and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

5 For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, *even loving-kindness and mercies.*

6 Both the great and the small shall die in

2. God answers his prayer. He had expressed some distrust and impatience; therefore, says God, *if thou wilt return, ashamed of this impatience, and humbly confessing it, then will I bring thee again to peace of conscience, and the exercise of the ministry with which God had entrusted him; and thou shalt stand before me, established in his office as a prophet: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, speaking comfort to God's people, and terror to the impenitent, thou shalt be as my mouth, employed as God's mouth to the people. Let them return unto thee, in penitence and obedience to thy word; but return not thou unto them, giving way in the least, keeping back a syllable of the threatenings to be denounced against them, or making any compliance with them: and then, if he approved himself thus faithful, God would fulfil to him his promise, chap. i. 18. making him a brazen wall, against which all the efforts of the princes should be vain and impotent: God's presence should comfort him, and his power support him, and save him from his foes, however many or mighty. Note; (1.) If we would return to the enjoyment of comfort, we must be restored to the right spirit from which we have departed. (2.) They who minister before God must carefully divide the word of truth, giving to the truly sincere their portion of comfort, and to the ungodly faithful warnings of their danger. (3.) When we approve ourselves faithful, we shall be supported against all opposition; God's strength shall be made perfect in our weakness, and all our terrible foes shall be compelled to lick the dust.*

## CHAP. XVI.

*Ver. 1. The word of the Lord came, &c.]* We have here a new discourse, wherein God forbids Jeremiah to marry, principally to mark out the miseries of parents, in the confused and ruinous state of things in Judæa. Fruitfulness was promised as a blessing under the law, but ceased to be so in such difficult times as were coming: for what comfort can parents promise themselves in their children, who must be exposed to all the miseries of a hostile invasion, and the insults of a barbarous and conquering enemy?

*Ver. 6. Nor cut themselves]* The cutting of their own flesh, as a mark of grief for their deceased friends and relations, though expressly forbidden to the Jews by the law, Lev.

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this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall *men* lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them:

7 Neither shall *men* tear *themselves* for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall *men* give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father, or for their mother.

8 Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink.

9 For thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.

10 ¶ And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what *is* our iniquity? or what *is* our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?

11 Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them; and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law;

12 And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me:

13 Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, *neither* ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favour.

14 ¶ Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

15 But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.

16 ¶ Behold, I will send for many fishers,

Lev. xix. 28. Deut. xiv. 1. appears from hence to have been still in use among them as well as among their neighbours, on this and other occasions of great mourning and affliction. See ch. xli. 5. and compare chap. xlvii. 5. xlviii. 37. The like practice attendant on funeral obsequies has been found among people lately discovered in the South Seas. "The New Zealanders have deep furrows marked on their foreheads. These were cut, in the frenzy of their grief, with a sharp shell, for the loss of their friends and relations. The Otaheitan women wound the crown of the head under the hair with a shark's tooth, to prove the sincerity of their grief: and the ancient Huns wounded their cheeks, on all occasions, where they wanted to testify their grief for the loss of a great man or a relation." Forster's Observations, p. 588. It is curious to remark, and to investigate the cause of such corresponding usages in nations, so widely distant from each other.

Nor make themselves bald for them] Cutting off the hair was a still more general practice among mankind as a token of mourning. See Bishop Lowth's Note on Isai. xv. 2. Forster, in his Observations, p. 560. speaks of "the hair cut off, and thrown on the bier" at Otaheite. And at the Friendly Islands, it is expressly said, that "cutting off the hair is one of their mourning ceremonies." Narrative of Cook's and Clarke's Voyage, vol. i. p. 112.—This also was forbidden by the Mosaic law, at the same time and on the same principles as the foregoing one. The hair is the natural ornament of the head, and the loss of it a considerable defect in the human figure. It was, therefore, not to be voluntarily assumed by those whose profession obliged

them to "worship JEHOVAH in the beauty of holiness." At what time the observance of the law in these particulars began to be relaxed, does not appear; but I do not recollect any traces of such customs among God's chosen people, earlier than those which are alluded to in the prophetic books properly so called.

Ver. 7. Neither shall men tear themselves for them, &c.] Neither shall men break bread in mourning to comfort them, &c. Houbigant, &c. See John, xi. 19. Prov. xxxi. 6. Tobit orders his son to give bread on the burial of the just. See Tobit, iv. 17. God tells Jeremiah, that nothing of this sort shall be done for parents or friends, in the state of confusion and desolation which was to follow.

Ver. 13. Where I will not shew you favour] Neither will I give you any favour with them there. Houbigant.

Ver. 14. Therefore, behold, the days come, &c.] Besides, lo! the days come, saith the Lord, &c. Houbigant. It may hence seem, that God's intent was, not only that they should consider their last deliverance by Cyrus to have been as much the effect of his providence, as was the rescuing of their fathers from the power of Pharaoh; but likewise that they were to consider the law of Moses, according to the interpretation which he had put upon it, and the alteration that he had made by the prophets, as preparatory to the introduction of a better covenant. See Durell's Parallel Prophecies, p. 226.

Ver. 16. Behold, I will send for many fishers] It is common with the sacred writers to represent enemies and oppressors under the metaphor of *fishers* and *hunters*, because they use all the methods of open force and secret stratagem,

faith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

17 For mine eyes *are* upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.

18 And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double: because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcases of their detestable and abominable things.

fratagem, to make men their prey. These two similitudes imply, that the Chaldeans should make an entire conquest of their whole land, and strip it of its riches and inhabitants. Nothing can be more absurd than the imagination of some, that by these fishermen are meant the apostles of Christ.

*Ver. 18. I will recompense—double*] This phrase signifies, to punish with severity. See ch. xvii. 18. and Isai. xl. 2. *The carcases of their detestable things*, means their idols, which are called carcases, not only because they are without life, but also because of their being so detestable in the sight of God. See Lowth and Calmet.

*Ver. 19. O Lord, my strength, and my fortress*] To demonstrate more emphatically the absurdity of idolatry, the prophet here foretels, that the time will come when the Gentiles themselves shall be ashamed of their idols, and address themselves to the true God in all their wants, as their only rock, their refuge, and defence; acknowledging the errors of their fathers, and that their former confidence was only vanity and lies. See Calmet.

*Ver. 21. I will this once cause them to know*] Instead of *this once*, Houbigant reads *by this turn, or change*; “that *is*,” says he, “after the Jews are rendered unworthy *to be called the people of God*?” for the Gentiles were then to be called to the faith of the Gospel, when the Jews were rejected. *To know my hand and my might*, signifies, “my vengeance and power, shewn in the destruction *of their idolatry*.”

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Example is often more effectual than precept. He who was sent to warn others of the destruction of the land, must by his conduct shew his assured conviction of the truth of what he preached. They who are urging men to look to the eternal world, must shew their own hearts fixed upon it, by their holy self-denial and deadness to every thing on earth. Three things are forbidden the prophet, and the reasons for these prohibitions subjoined.

1. He must not marry, nor have a family. Not as if a life of celibacy were, in an abstract view, either enjoined or desirable; but because of the distress coming upon the land, which would make a family a burden, and occasion the bitterest anguish from the grievous deaths of those so near and dear to him. For God was about to pour down

19 O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and *things* wherein *there is* no profit.

20 Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they *are* no gods?

21 Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name *is* The LORD.

his judgments; to send forth death in all its terrors, armed with the famine, pestilence, and sword; and to cover the earth with carcases so numerous, that there should not be graves to receive them, nor any to lament over or to bury them.

2. He must not go to *the house of mourning*. With friendly sympathy he had, no doubt, been wont to weep with those that wept; but now he must abstain, and shew no usual expression of grief for his nearest friend or relation, because either the dead were removed from the evils to come, or rather as a sign to the living of the greatness of the approaching calamities; when death would make such terrible devastation, that even the great should lie unburied on the ground, and none be left to shew the last kind office to the corpse, or to mourn over it. God having removed his peace from the land, a consumption utter and universal is decreed against it.

3. He must not go to *the house of feasting*. He had been accustomed, no doubt, to join with his friends when they made an entertainment, and innocently to partake of their repast; but this was now unseasonable; and when he foresaw the terrible wrath of God impending, he wanted by his own conduct to awaken their concern. The voice of mirth and bridal songs were about to cease, and no voice to be heard but the shrieks of the miserable and the groans of the dying.

2dly, We have,

1. The insolent and unhumiliated challenge which this hardened people should make, beholding his conduct and hearing his warnings. They would ask, *Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us?* as if they had never given him any provocation: or, *What is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?* They pretend a claim to God, as their God, and would deny the charge which the prophet continued to lay against them; so blind, hardened, and obstinate, are sinners in the error of their ways; and, instead of justifying God in his judgments, quarrel with his visitations as unjust or severe.

2. The prophet has his answer given him, and enough to silence their presumption. Their fathers' iniquities, backslidings, disobedience, and idolatries, were great and shameful; but their own far exceeded: instead of being warned by the judgments which they suffered, or being



## C H A P. XVII.

*The captivity of Judah for her sin. Trust in man is cursed; in God is blessed. The deceitful heart cannot deceive God. The salvation of God. The prophet complaineth of the mockers of his prophesy: he is sent to renew the covenant, in hallowing the sabbath.*

[Before Christ 602.]

**T**HE sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;

2 Whilst their children remember their altars

led to repentance by God's patience, they had grown worse and worse, filling up what was lacking of the wickedness of their predecessors; more perversely set on their own evil ways, and more resolutely hardened against all the rebukes of God's prophets; therefore no wonder that, as the just punishment of their iniquities, God would cast them out of that good land which they had defiled, send them far off into a miserable captivity, make that idolatry which had been their sin their grievous punishment, and withdraw from them every token of favour which might alleviate their miseries.

3dly, In judgment God still remembers mercy.

1. He gives them hopes that a glorious day of deliverance should come, so much greater than that of their redemption from Egypt, that in a measure it should obliterate the mention of it. And this was primarily fulfilled in the recovery of the Jews from Babylon, and the countries of the north, whither they had been carried away captives, and may have reference to that more glorious expected event, when the Lord shall call them into his church from their present dispersion.

2. Before he shewed them this favour, he would severely visit their iniquities. As fishes taken in an evil net, and beasts in the hunter's snare, so would God give them up to the Chaldeans to be taken and destroyed, who should pursue them into all their lurking-places, and drag them into captivity. Their evil ways, however secret, were not hid from God's eye: he marked their impious rites and abominable idolatries, *the carcases of their detestable things*, offered to their idols, so many, and so universally practised through the land, that they filled God's inheritance with their horrid profanations. For this, therefore, he threatens to *recompense their sin double*; not beyond what it deserved, but double above all other visitations that he had brought upon them, or much more than they feared or apprehended. *Note;* (1.) No darkness can hide the sinner from God's eye. (2.) Flight is in vain when he pursues: no cave, no mountain can then conceal the guilty from his judgment.

3. The prophet is comforted, not only in the prospect that the punishment of his people, however severe, would have an end, but also with the foresight of the conversion of the Gentiles; *O Lord, my strength and my fortress*, who had hitherto supported him amidst all his infirmities, and against all his enemies; *and my refuge in the day of affliction*, who would preserve him amidst all the approaching evils:

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and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills.

3 O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil, and thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders.

4 And thou, even thyself, shall discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever.

*the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth;* either when the Jews returned from Babylon, and many proselytes came up with them; or when the Gospel was preached, and the Gentiles became obedient to the faith, renouncing the idols of their fathers, convinced of their vanity and unprofitableness, and astonished at their absurdity, that any could think those to be gods which were the workmanship of their own hands, wood or stone. But now God will cause them to know better, making them, by his divine grace, acquainted with his own glorious perfections as the only living Jehovah, with the Gospel of his dear Son, and the way of life and salvation attainable through the Redeemer.

Some choose rather to understand all this of the Jews, called Gentiles, because of their imitation of their sins, and now quitting with shame their idolatries, and returning to the one living and true God. *Note;* (1.) They who make God their refuge shall find support under the heaviest afflictions. (2.) When the sinner, convinced and ashamed of his folly, begins bitterly to reflect upon himself, then God will again restore him to his favour, and make him know once more the wonders of his grace.

## C H A P. XVII.

*Ver. 1. The sin of Judah is written*] This chapter is connected with the last thus: "I am now about to make my vengeance manifest upon Judah: their crimes are risen to the greatest height; they even glory in them. They have engraved them as an inscription upon their heart, upon the horns of their altars; as they engrave memorable actions, and the great exploits of heroes, upon stone and brass: so far from forgetting their impiety, they have erected monuments thereof in all places of their country." The prophet seems to allude to a custom of the heathens, who used to suspend certain amulets upon their hearts, on which were engraven the names or symbols of their deities. In like manner the names of these idols were engraved on the horns of the altars: the prophet's meaning is, that the fondness which the Jews had for idolatry was grown so inveterate, that it was scarcely possible to eradicate it, notwithstanding the calamities to which it would expose them. See Acts, xvii. 23. and Calmet.

*Ver. 3. O my mountain*] Houbigant, following the Vulgate, reads thus, *Thy high places are in all thy borders; I will*

5 ¶ Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD:

6 For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

7 ¶ Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is:

8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

9 ¶ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

10 I the LORD search the heart; I try the

reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

11 As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

12 ¶ A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

13 O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.

15 ¶ Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the LORD? let it come now.

*will therefore for all thy sins cause thy riches and treasures to be spoiled.* According to our interpretation, by *my mountain in the field*, we are to understand the temple.

*Ver. 5. Cursed be the man, &c.]* This alludes to the confidence which the Jews had of assistance from the Egyptians, and their other allies, when threatened by the Chaldeans. By *flesh* is meant mere mortal man, in opposition to the Almighty; and by *arm* is meant *power* or confidence. See *Isai. xxxi. 1.* and *Calmet.*

*Ver. 6. The heath]* See *ch. xlviii. 6.*

*Ver. 8. Shall not see]* *Is not sensible when heat cometh, &c.*

*Ver. 9. The heart is deceitful, &c.]* This passage, divided from the context, and considered as an independent proposition, has been applied in a sense different from the design of the author. This will evidently appear, if we consider the connexion, and the general reason that he is pursuing: for, in the 5th verse, God is introduced as denouncing a woe against all those who fix their ultimate dependence on human power and policy. In the 7th and 8th verses are described the wisdom and happiness of trusting in the Lord, and making him our strength. Then follows the verse that we are considering, which by all the rules of good interpretation (since there is not the least mark of the prophet's beginning a new topic of discourse) must be referred to the same argument, and contain another strong reason against making man our confidence. *The heart is deceitful, &c.* that is to say, "There may be infinite devices and subtleties in the hearts of men, which thou canst not understand: while they promise thee fair, and make the warmest protestations of affection and zeal for thy service their intentions may be contrary, and their views private and selfish: their resolutions are fickle and mutable, and many little circumstances may prevail with them to change their purposes, and so render their promises vain and delusory. Nay, it is possible for them to arrive at

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"such a pitch of premeditated and desperate wickedness, as to endeavour, even under friendly pretences, to undermine thy interest. Place not, therefore, thy supreme and ultimate confidence in man; but repose it in the unchangeable God; who, as by reason of the perfect and necessary rectitude of his nature, he cannot deceive thee; so, as he is absolute Lord of the universe, and the uncontrollable disposer of all events, he must be able with ease to effect every thing which is necessary for thy security and happiness." See *Foster's Sermons, vol. i. p. 272.*

*Ver. 11. As the partridge]* *As the snipe hatcheth or broodeth upon eggs which she did not lay; such is he who getteth wealth, and not by right. In the midst of his days it shall desert him, and at his end he shall be a fool.* See *Scheuchzer on 1 Sam. xxvi. 20.* Houbigant renders the 12th verse, *The ancient throne of glory is taken from our sanctuary.*

*Ver. 12. A glorious high throne]* As in the preceding verses was set forth the vain dependence of him who seeks to advance himself by indirect methods; so here we are taught the solid foundation which he builds upon, who has recourse to the divine blessing and seeks to recommend himself to the favour of that Being, to whom Israel was taught to look up for support, and whose kingdom from all eternity ruleth over all, even the glorious Jehovah, the true Messiah, the God of spiritual Israel.

*Ver. 13. Shall be written in the earth]* "Their name shall be written in the dust, the least wind shall obliterate it." This is a proverbial manner of speaking, parallel to that of the Latins, who, speaking of vain and false promises, say that they are written on water; or, perhaps, to be *written upon earth*, may be put in opposition with the writing in heaven in the book of life. "The wicked may make themselves a name upon the earth; but this is all their portion; they shall be blotted out of the book of life." See *Calmet.* Houbigant renders

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16 As for me, I have not hastened from *being* a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was *right* before thee.

17 Be not a terror unto me: thou *art* my hope in the day of evil.

18 Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded: let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

19 ¶ Thus said the LORD unto me; Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem;

20 And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates:

21 Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to

yourself, and bear no burden on the sabbath-day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jerusalem.

22 Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath-day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers.

23 But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction.

24 And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath-day, but hallow the sabbath-day, to do no work therein;

25 Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever.

26 And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem,

ders the clause, *The rebellious shall be extirpated from the earth, because, &c.*

*Ver. 15. Where is the word of the Lord? let it come now]* The interval of delay between the delivery of the word of prophecy and its accomplishment has afforded frequently to unbelievers a handle for scoffing at and questioning the truth of it. They want, forsooth, more immediate proofs for their conviction. See *Isai. v. 19. Ezek. xii. 22. 27. Amos, v. 18. 2 Pet. iii. 4.*

*Ver. 16. As for me, I have not hastened]* *But I have not been in haste to outrun thy guidance, &c.]* Houbigant translates it, *As for me, I do not hasten it, but follow after thee;* that is to say, obeying thy counsel and advice.

*Ver. 25. Then shall there enter, &c.* It hence appears, that the judgments denounced against Jerusalem were not irreversible; and from Jeremiah's advice to Zedekiah, chap. xxxviii. 17. it may be concluded, that if the king had hearkened to that counsel, the city would not have been destroyed, and he himself might have continued a tributary king under Nebuchadnezzar: see chap. xiii. 23. and Lowth.

*Ver. 26. And from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south]* These divisions of the country belonging to the tribe of Judah may be found, *Josh. xv. 21. 33. 48.* and these together with the tribe of Benjamin made up the whole kingdom of Judah, when taken separate from the kingdom of Israel, or of the ten tribes. See the same enumeration, ch. xxxii. 44.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, They seemed to wonder, chap. xvi. 10. what they had done to deserve such heavy judgments. But surely there was cause abundant given.

1. *The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, with the*

*point of a diamond;* deep, legible, and lasting are the characters; the love of their iniquities is *graven upon their hearts;* the horns of the altars of their idols, sprinkled with the blood of their sacrifices, proclaimed their guilt; and their very children, trained up in their idolatrous rites, were evidences against them; or, *as they remember their children,* so do they *their altars,* with the same fondness, and as strongly attached to their abominations. *Note;* The iniquity of sinners is written before God. If the blood of Jesus blot not out the deadly charge, woe unto them in the day when the judgment shall sit, and the books be opened.

2. The charge being proved, judgment is passed on them. The city and temple, called the mountain of the Lord's house, *Mic. iv. 1.* are devoted to the spoil, with all their treasures, for the sin of the people throughout the land. The sin was universal, and so would be the desolation. *And thou, even thyself,* or *in thee,* those who dwell in the land, or *through thyself,* the ruin is of thine own seeking, *shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee,* led captive into a strange land, and doomed to hard servitude under their tyrannical conquerors; and this through the fierce anger of the Lord kindled against them, and which would burn against the impenitent among them, not only all their days, but to eternity. *Note;* If sinners continue hardened under God's present judgments, they will find these but the beginning of sorrows, and the sparks of those everlasting burnings which are kindling for them.

2dly, The Jews often thought by their alliances with the neighbouring nations to gain protection against their invading enemies. This was both their sin, and a chief cause of their ruin.

1. The prophet denounces the curse of God against such

and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt-offerings, and sacrifices,

and meat-offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise unto the house of the LORD.  
27 But if ye will not hearken unto me to

such as *trusted in man, and made flesh their arm, and whose heart departed from the Lord*, withdrawing their confidence from him, to place it on worms; which was, to change a rock for a reed. Thus they trusted alternately on the Egyptians and Assyrians, see chap. ii. 36, 37. to their sad disappointment; or they placed such confidence in their relation after the flesh to Abraham, that they promised themselves security, notwithstanding their faithless departures from Abraham's God. But the consequences would be ruinous; *like the heath in the desert*, so desolate should they be made, and serve as fuel to the flames of God's wrath, and *see no good days*, or behold and pine away at the mercies that others should receive, from which they would be excluded, and become as a land parched and uninhabited; their country a desert, and themselves destitute of every comfort. *Note;* (1.) God is the only worthy object of our faith and hope: human-confidences may fail us, but he never will fail those who perseveringly trust in him. (2.) When we depend on our own doings and duties to recommend us for acceptance with God, instead of trusting on the infinite merit and grace of Jesus, we shall by the issue be convinced of the vanity of our dependence.

2. As miserable as they are who depart from God, so blessed and happy are they, who, renouncing all other grounds of hope, constantly, faithfully, and perseveringly rest their souls on God in Christ alone. They shall be like the tree planted by the rivers, always flourishing and fruitful, firm-rooted, and in the most scorching season watered abundantly. Their profession shall be ornamental, their stability secured; in time of severest temptation they shall be kept from withering, and their fruits of holiness shall abound and abide, till grace ripens into glory.

3. The cause of all departures from God is here laid open. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* Man's nature is fallen; his heart is radically corrupt, all its faculties perverted, and his whole mind and conscience defiled; *deceitful above all things*; puts false glosses upon sin, which hide its malignity and danger; fancies delights in the ways of indulgence, that are never found; buoys up the vain confidence of the sinner with hopes of impunity and peace, when God hath said, *There is no peace! and desperately wicked*; not only evil in that mere state of nature, but evil continually and incurably, without the grace of God, desperately set upon sin, without power to abstain from it, or ability to get rid of the bondage of corruption; nay, rather hugging the chains: *who can know it?* The more we know of ourselves, far from having fathomed the abyss of evil, we discover but the more clearly, that the depths of corruption in man by nature are unfathomable: we can neither understand the number of our errors, nor promise ourselves for a moment, without divine aid, security from the deepest and foulest falls. There is a mystery of iniquity within us by nature, which none can know but God alone, and nothing can cure but his almighty grace; and therefore it

were folly to depend on ourselves or others, in whose hearts such deceit and desperate wickedness are naturally so deeply rooted. But *I the Lord search the heart*; its most secret purposes are known to him: *I try the reins*, and see the rising thoughts afar off: from him nothing is hid, nothing is secret; and thus all-seeing ought he to be, who is the final Judge of all, and by whose decisions our eternal state must be determined, and every man receive judgment according to truth. *Note;* (1.) Nothing affords so humbling a consideration to us, as this striking view of our fallen nature; the pride of man must here for ever stand aghast and confounded. (2.) They who place confidence in their own hearts, in their resolutions and purposes, prove how ignorant they are of themselves, and predict only their own falls. (3.) Since at God's awful judgment we must shortly stand to receive our doom, it becomes us daily to be proving ourselves, and begging of God to discover to us our own hearts, that we may now so judge ourselves, as not then to be condemned of the Lord.

4. A heavy charge is laid against them for their covetousness and injustice. They would be rich, and stop at no methods to succeed, right or wrong; but God will not suffer them to enjoy their ill-gotten gains. Though brooding over them, as a partridge on her nest, their riches, like her eggs addled or broken, should afford them no solid satisfaction; and in the midst of their days, when they thought their toils were over, and began to talk of enjoying themselves, they shall be cut off, and leave their wealth all behind, made monuments of the folly of trusting on uncertain riches more than in the living God; and these things are written for our admonition: may we hear and be wise!

3dly, We have the prophet,

1. Acknowledging how well they deserved to be rejected, who were ungrateful to a God so great and gracious. *A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary*; in the temple at Jerusalem God had erected his throne, there he manifested his presence, and thither, as to a sanctuary, the guilty might flee, even to the mercy-seat, and there find a hiding-place. *O JEHOVAH, the hope of Israel*, the never-failing refuge of the faithful, in whom none ever trusted and were confounded; *all that forsake thee*, basely withdraw their allegiance, turn aside unto idols, or place their dependence on an arm of flesh, they shall be ashamed; their confidences shall fail them, and their iniquities issue in their confusion. *They that depart from me*, and will not hear the warnings of God in the mouth of his prophet, shall be written in the earth; numbered with transgressors, and trampled upon with contempt; or rather consigned to the grave, cut off in their iniquities, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters, the source of all blessedness; and they who depart from him court their own misery.

2. He prays for himself. *Heal me, O Lord!* for, though a prophet, he found much infirmity cleaving to him, the effects of which would prove mortal without the powerful

hallow the sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath-day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

efficacy of divine grace: or he was broken-hearted for the sins of the people, and in the view of the evils coming upon them, cries out, *Heal me, and I shall be healed: save me, and I shall be saved.* God's power was all-sufficient; on this he placed his dependence, and with humble prayer, in God's appointed way, fought the blessing that he wanted: *for thou art my praise*, the object of it continually, who hitherto had given him abundant matter for his praises, and he trusted would continue to do so. *Note;* (1.) Every blessing that we need must be fought by the prayer of faith. (2.) Sin is the soul's disease, and will be fatal unless healed by grace. The salvation of eternity must be begun on earth: they who would be saved in heaven, must now be saved below.

3. He complains of their hardened infidelity. He faithfully delivered the message that he received from God, and they treated it with contempt. *Where is the word of the Lord? where are the threatened judgments? they saw no symptoms of their approach, and utterly disbelieved them; and therefore in defiance bade them come. Let it come now, as if they were above all fear, and dared the arm of Omnipotence.* *Note;* When sinners are thus incorrigible, their damnation slumbereth not.

4. Their ill usage and insolent treatment had not discouraged him from the faithful and diligent discharge of his office. *I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee; following God's directions, notwithstanding every opposition: neither have I desired the woeful day, or wished to see the miseries that he foretold; but prayed and preached with all his might, that by a timely repentance they might prevent the threatened judgments. And for this he could appeal to the heart-searching God: thou knowest it: that which came out of my lips was right before thee: he spoke exactly according to God's word, with uprightness and simplicity, and was conscious of God's approbation of his conduct.* *Note;* (1.) Whatever treatment we meet with, we must patiently and boldly persist in the work of our ministry. (2.) Many think that the preachers of God's word delight in declaring the terrors of the Lord; but it is the most painful part of their office. (3.) They who have the heart-searching God to appeal to, need not regard the revilings of men.

5. He begs God's protection and support, and that his enemies might be put to confusion. *Be not a terror unto me; not only do not confound me before them, but comfort me under their opposition; for more seems to be implied than is expressed. Thou art my hope in the day of evil, I disclaim all other dependence. Let them be confounded; convinced and penitent, or silenced by the infliction of the threatened vengeance; but let me not be confounded by their wickedness, or in the event proved to have spoken falsely. Let them be dismayed, with the sense of their danger; but let me not be dismayed by their revilings or persecutions. Bring upon them the day of evil, at which they scoff: since they will not be reformed, it is but just they should suffer for their impotence: and destroy them with double destruction;*

utterly, or beyond all their apprehensions; or by the Chaldeans first, and finally by the Romans: and this he prays, not out of revenge for a private injury done to him, but in zeal for God's glory dishonoured by them. *Note;* (1.) When God is our hope, we need fear no evil. (2.) If we be faithful, God will never suffer us to be confounded.

4thly, We have in this chapter another and new discourse; the subject relates to the sanctification of the sabbath-day. We have,

1. The places where he must deliver it. In the gate of the king, that all the great men at the court might hear it, whose good example would be very influential, or their bad conduct productive of peculiar evil: and then in all the gates of Jerusalem, that all might hear, and none plead ignorance, from the least to the greatest, where the matter was of such universal concern.

2. The manner is prescribed in which the sabbath-day should be observed. *Thus saith the Lord, whom all are bound to obey, and whose word whosoever transgresses doth it at his peril; Take heed to yourselves; where so much depended upon it, they had need be careful: or, take heed to your souls; for nothing is well done in God's fight but what comes from the heart. They must bear no burden, be employed in no fervile work of their ordinary calling, in husbandry, traffic, or merchandize; but hallow the sabbath-day, in the diligent and conscientious improvement of those sacred hours in every public and private means of grace, as I commanded your fathers.* It was no new commandment, but enjoined from the day on which they were taken into covenant with God, on their deliverance from Egypt, though their fathers had rebelled and smarted for their disobedience to it, whose ill examples they must shun, and be admonished by their suffering, and not be, like them, untractable and disobedient.

3. The blessedness and benefit of observing the divine command would be very great to the nation, and to all who belonged thereunto. Their kings of the royal race of David should continue to reign in splendor, and they be happy under their mild government. Their city and country should prosper exceedingly, religion flourish through the land, God's altar never want sacrifices, nor they the liberal offerings to bring, out of the abundance which God would bestow on them. *Note;* (1.) True religion is the greatest friend to national happiness. (2.) Nothing has so immediate a tendency to promote universal godliness, as the conscientious observation of the sabbath-day.

4. Disobedience to this injunction would certainly be attended with the most fatal consequences. In just indignation for his slighted sabbaths, the fire of God's wrath would be kindled, nor ever be quenched, till the gates of Jerusalem are in flames by invading foes, the executioners of his vengeance, her palaces laid in smoky ruins, and utter desolations poured out upon all the cities of Judah. Let sabbath-breakers remember, and tremble at the fire of divine vengeance which they provoke.

## C H A P. XVIII.

*Under the type of a potter, is shewed God's absolute power in disposing of nations. Judgments threatened to Judah for her strange revolt. Jeremiah prayeth against his conspirators.*

[Before Christ 605.]

**T**HE word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

7 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it;

8 If that nation, against whom I have pro-

nounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

9 And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;

10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

11 ¶ Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

12 And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.

13 Therefore, thus saith the LORD; Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing.

14 Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon, which cometh from the rock of the field? or

## C H A P. XVIII.

*Ver. 1. The word, &c.]* We have here a new discourse of Jeremiah. The Lord commands him to go down to a certain potter, where he would cause him to hear his word. God frequently makes use of this comparison of a potter, to point out man's absolute dependence upon him. See Pl. ii. 9. Isai. xlv. 9. Rom. ix. 21.

*Ver. 3. On the wheels] Upon the stones.* This is the literal signification of עַל-הַאֲבָנִים *al haabnaim*, which the LXX. also render ἐπι τῶν λίθων. There can be no doubt that the machine is intended, on which the potters formed their earthen vessels; and the appellation, οὐ λίθοι, "the stones," will appear very proper, if we consider this machine as consisting of a pair of circular stones placed upon one another like millstones; of which the lower was immovable, but the upper one turned upon the foot of a spindle or axis, and had motion communicated to it by the feet of the potter sitting at his work; as may be learned from Ecclus. xxxviii. 29. Upon the top of this upper stone, which was flat, the clay was placed, which the potter, having given the stone the due velocity, formed into shape with his hands. The principal difference between this and the wheel in present use seems to be, that, instead of the upper stone, a nut or beam is used of about two feet in length, and one in diameter, the foot of which plays perpendicularly upon the nether stone. This beam serves for an axis to a circular wooden frame, like a wheel, joined to it at the lower end; and on the top of this beam, which

is flat, the clay is placed, and the motion given, and the operation performed in the manner above described. It is probable that the upper stone was for convenience shaped not unlike this wheel and beam; and might not improperly have given the name of "the wheel" to the whole machine; but not of "the wheels," as in our English version; there being but one of the stones which had the resemblance of a wheel.

*Ver. 8. If that nation, against whom, &c.]* As the threats of God are conditional, when they are suspended by his long-suffering and mercy, or prevented by the amendment of the persons against whom they are denounced; he is said in Scripture to *repent*: not that the phrase implies that there is any change in Him, but in us; and that his behaviour towards us, provided his denunciations were not conditional, is the same as if he repented, or changed his mind. But see what has been said on this subject in the note on Gen. vi. 6.

*Ver. 14. Will a man leave the snow, &c.]* Shall one leave the moisture of the field for the snow-water of Lebanon; or shall the running waters be forsaken for the muddy waters? Lowth. The two similitudes in this verse are evidently designed to illustrate the unnatural and absurd conduct of the Jewish nation in deserting their God, and adopting the superstitions of a strange idolatry, in preference to the good old paths which God had ordained for them to walk in. As to the first, Lebanon, it must be observed, was the highest mountain in Israel, lying to the north of it, and having

shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?

15 Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up;

16 To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.

17 I will scatter them as with an east-wind before the enemy; I will shew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

18 ¶ Then said they, Come, and let us

devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

19 Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me.

20 Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them.

21 Therefore deliver up their children to

having its summit always covered with snow; from the whiteness of which it is supposed to have derived its name. See the accounts of modern travellers referred to, Ancient Univ. Hist. vol. i. book i. p. 570. fol. The same circumstance is also recorded by Tacitus, Hist. lib. v. cap. 6.

*Ver. 15. To vanity, and they have caused them, &c.] To idols, which have caused them, &c.]*

*Ver. 18. Come, and let us devise, &c.]* "Let us accuse him of being a false prophet; for his threatenings plainly contradict God's promises to his people; whereby we are assured that there shall always be a succession of priests to explain the law, or scribes or learned men to elucidate the more difficult parts of it, and of prophets to instruct the people in the knowledge of futurity." The word מַחֲשָׁבוֹת *machshaboth*, rendered *devices*, signifies an *accusation*. Houbigant thinks that the clause, *Let us smite him with the tongue*, should rather be rendered, *Let us smite him privily*; for the enemies of Jeremiah rather consulted how they might kill him, than how they might wound his reputation. Respecting the strong execrations found in the remainder of this chapter, and in other parts of this book, we must refer to what we have said on the similar ones in the book of Psalms. They are not to be considered as the effusion of an unholy zeal, but as simple prophecies.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, God often teaches by similitudes, to make the deeper impression, and that the truths may be better remembered. We have,

1. The prophet sent to the potter's house, and informed that God would instruct him. Instantly obedient, he goes down, and observes the workman turning the wheel, fashioning the vessels, marring and making them according to his pleasure.

2. God's application of the subject. Such absolute power as the potter hath over the clay, hath God over the sons of men. He hath the most incontestible right over us: it were arrogance in us to find fault with his procedure, and folly to oppose what we cannot prevent. According to the counsels of his own will, he may dispose of nations and individuals, and none can say unto him, What doest thou? Absolute and intire submission to his will is our bounden duty: not that he exercises his power

in any manner to the impeachment of his justice or mercy. He will be found righteous in all his ways; not only sovereignly great, but infinitely gracious. Even when his threatenings have gone forth against a nation, and their destruction approaches, if they repent and return, he will change the method of his dispensations towards them, remove their fears, and return to them in mercy. On the other hand, if he have spoken by way of promise, to crown a people with every national blessing, to enrich them with good, and prosper all their enterprizes; if they prove ungrateful for his favours, desert his service, and disobey his word, then he will turn the current of his kindness from them, and pour on them the wrath which they have provoked. *Note*; (1.) All our miseries may be traced from our sins, whether private or public. (2.) God will make his glory to appear; and, though as absolute sovereign none have a right to question him, he will vindicate his ways to man, and appear just when he judgeth.

2dly, The foregoing truths are particularly applied to the Jewish nation. We have,

1. The warning and admonition given to the Jewish people. Evil was on the wheel for them, though the execution was for awhile suspended; and one more invitation given them, to prevent the impending ruin by their speedy and penitent return. *Note*; God never strikes without warning: they who continue impenitent are inexcusable.

2. Their hardened rejection of the warning. *They said, There is no hope*; if nothing but parting from their sins would do, they resolved to abide the consequences. Let God do his worst, *we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.* *Note*; Sinners often dare not express themselves with such effrontery in words, yet practically every sinner does it in works, and these speak most strongly.

3. Their monstrous folly and wickedness upbraided. Among the vilest heathen nations were no abominations or infelices found equal to theirs; even the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah; but, horrible to tell! Israel, that *virgin laughter*, who by her relation to God should have kept herself wholly for him, pure in his ways and worship, has apostatized from him, has forsaken



the famine, and pour out their *blood* by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and *be* widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men *be* slain by the sword in battle.

22 Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon

them: for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet.

23 Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay *me*: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee: deal *thus* with them in the time of thine anger.

forfaken the living God for dumb idols. *Will a man, parched with thirst, leave the snow-water of Lebanon which cometh down melted in summer from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken by the thirsty traveller?* This would be folly unheard of; yet more egregiously foolish were they; because my people hath forgotten me, the fountain of living waters, to drink at the broken cisterns of idol altars. *They have burnt incense to vanity, to wretched deities, who could not profit them: or, in vain they burn incense; their services were an abomination while their sins remained; and they have caused them to stumble in their ways, their idols, or their false prophets, from the ancient paths, the way revealed of old in God's word; or the paths of eternity, which led to glory everlasting, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up; a road unknown to the saints of God; a way of wickedness and idolatry, in which they stumbled and fell into the pit of eternal misery; this being the certain and fatal consequence of their ways, to make their land desolate, ravaged by the enemy, and depopulated by famine and the sword; a perpetual hissing, all who passed by expressing their abhorrence of such guilty conduct; astonished at the devastations they beheld, and wagging their head, deriding or upbraiding them. With blasts of displeasure, furious as the east wind, God will scatter them before their enemies, weak as stubble to resist their attacks, and in the day of their calamity turn a deaf ear to their cries, nor cast a look of compassion on their miseries.* Note; (1.) Apostates deserve to be upbraided, and they will shortly awake to everlasting shame and contempt. (2.) They who persevere in the ways of sin, must expect no mercy in the day of judgment. God will then mock at their calamities, Prov. i. 26—28.

3dly, Behold the treatment which faithful ministers may expect from a disobedient and gainsaying people.

1. Enraged by the rebukes of the prophet, they consult how to destroy him. To cover their malice, they pretend zeal for religion, and would brand him as a false prophet. *Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah, to get rid of him and his prophecies, for the law shall not perish from the priest, &c.* Notwithstanding his predictions of the cessation of the temple service; of the insatiation of their counsels; and his warnings of the falsehood of their prophets; they flattered themselves that their priesthood should continue, and that their rulers in church and state should consult upon and secure their safety; and that they should see the fulfilment of the visions of peace with which their own prophets flattered them: therefore, said they, *Come, and let us smite him with the tongue; either accuse him as a lying prophet before the magistrates, to*

put him to death, or load him with reproaches, and make him contemptible in the eyes of the people: and let us not give heed to any of his words, but treat him as a deceiver, who speaks not from the Lord, but out of his own heart.

Note; (1.) The wicked world is in a confederacy against the true prophets, and none forwarder to shew their malice, than the false and faithless ministers who cannot bear their just rebukes. (2.) To cloak the malice of persecutors, this was the old pretence, to represent the faithful and zealous ministers as men dangerous to the state, and not to be tolerated; or as deluders and enthusiasts, and to be trampled on. (3.) They who dare not encounter the lash of men's tongues, must never think of standing up for God. (4.) Rejection of the servant is an insult on the master. Little do the revilers of Christ's ministers think, that their reproaches light not so much on them as him.

2. He lodges his appeal with God, and begs his interposition on his behalf. He prayed God to take notice of their blasphemies and reproaches, their ingratitude and cruelty, in returning him evil for good, and thirsting for his blood, when God, the searcher of hearts, knew how earnestly he had laboured, how fervently he had prayed, to avert the impending judgments from them. Therefore, in just indignation, he imprecates upon them the vengeance which they had provoked; that death in every tremendous shape might seize both young and old, and their widows, bereaved of husbands and children together, lament the fearful ravages which they beheld; that shrieks and cries might fill the houses, when the enemy, suddenly entering at the breach, massacred and plundered without pity or remorse: for this would be but the just retaliation for the snares that they laid to murder him, which, however secret, God knew and would avenge. Their sin was now unpardonable; he that had often prayed for them, now abandons them to their ruin; not in a spirit of revenge desiring their misery, but in zeal for God's glory, to see that vindicated, waiting their final overthrow, and expecting and desiring that God would deal with them in the time of his anger according to the denunciations which, as his prophet, he had delivered.

Note; (1.) Jeremiah was a type of Jesus, thus basely reviled, ungratefully persecuted, and all his prayers returned with blasphemies. (2.) What Jeremiah spoke in the spirit of prophecy must not be pleaded as an example for our imitation. We must pray for those that persecute us, if peradventure God may yet give them repentance. (3.) The persecutors of his prophets will find at last an avenging God; and woe to them against whom those abused ministers of grace stand up to bear witness in a judgment-day!

## C H A P. XIX.

*Under the type of breaking a potter's vessel, is foreboded the desolation of the Jews for their sins.*

[Before Christ 605.]

**T**HUS saith the LORD, Go, and get a potter's earthen bottle, and *take* of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests;

2 And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which *is* by the entry of the east-gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee,

3 And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.

4 Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents;

5 They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire *for* burnt-offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake *it*, neither came *it* into my mind:

6 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter.

7 And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

8 And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof.

9 And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

## C H A P. XIX.

*Ver. 1. Go, and get a potter's earthen bottle*] The meaning of this significative emblem is fully explained in the subsequent verses; and indeed the whole chapter requires very little comment.

*Ver. 2. By the entry of the east gate*] According to others, *The entry of the potter's gate*; which seems to be the best reading, as it denotes that gate, through which the potters who made the vessels for the use of the temple, in its neighbourhood, carried out the fragments of their broken vessels. The context, ver. 10. 14. ch. xviii. 2. and Zech. xi. 13. confirm this conjecture; besides which, we may add, that the valley of Hinnom and the brook Cedron were near the temple; that the potters lived within that gate which led thither, and that they carried their rubbish out of that gate. See Grotius, and Houbigant.

*Ver. 4. And have estranged this place*]. *And have turned this place to improper uses.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 7. And I will make void, &c.*] *And I will dissipate, &c.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 9. I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons*] See 2 Kings, vi. 29.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, To awaken conviction in the hearts of a stupid people, every method is tried, that they may be left at last utterly inexcusable.

1. Jeremiah is ordered down to the valley of the son of Hinnom, the place where their most shocking idolatries

were committed, and the destined spot of their terrible execution. He is commanded to take an earthen pitcher, and, as witnesses of what he was about to do and say, to bring with him some of the ancients of the priests and people; for when God speaks by the meanest of his prophets, the greatest should not think themselves above attending their ministry.

2. God will there tell him his message, which he must proclaim aloud as a herald; and the purport of it is most tremendous, which all are summoned to attend, from the greatest to the least; and enough it is to make *the ears of every one that heareth it to tingle*, as thunderstruck with the dreadful sound. The sins charged upon them are most shocking and aggravated; apostacy from God, profanation of his temple, foul idolatry, barbarous cruelty, the inhuman sacrifice of infants to their abominable deities, yea, even the *burning their sons with fire, for burnt-offerings unto Baal*; sacrifices abhorred of God, and such as he never thought of, nor expected from his worshippers. For these abominations judgment is threatened proportionate to such atrocious guilt: on that very spot the wrath of God should be executed upon them, and the valley acquire a new name: no more called *Tophet*, from the drums which were to drown the cries of infants burning alive in sacrifice to Moloch, but *the valley of Slaughter*, from the multitudes who should there be massacred by the Chaldeans. Their counsels then should be made vain, which in that place they had taken to oppose their invaders, or to fly to their idols

10 Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee,

11 And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as *one* breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury *them* in Tophet, till *there be* no place to bury.

12 Thus will I do unto this place, saith the LORD, and to the inhabitants thereof, and *even* make this city as Tophet:

13 And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink-offerings unto other gods.

14 Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the LORD had sent him to prophecy; and

he stood in the court of the LORD's house; and said to all the people,

15 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

CH A P. XX.

*Pashur, smiting Jeremiah, receiveth a new name, and a fearful doom. Jeremiah complaineth of contempt, of treachery, and of his birth.*

[Before Christ 605.]

**N**OW Pashur, the son of Immer the priest, who *was* also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things.

2 Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet,

idols for relief in the day of their calamity. There they must fall by the sword of their merciless enemies, thirsting for their blood; their carcases ignominiously exposed, and unburied; a prey to the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth. Such plagues and desolations shall come upon their city and country, that astonishment at the greatness of the calamity shall mix with indignation against their sins in every passer-by: yea, to such straits should they be reduced in the siege, that famine should compel them to feed upon their dearest friends, and even their children, on their dead corpses, or murdered, to satisfy their raging hunger; a scene of wretchedness which makes us shudder but to relate! O sin! sin! what hast thou done!

2dly. The judgment denounced is,

1. Confirmed by a significant sign. The earthen bottle in his hand is dashed in pieces on the ground, and the explication of it given, that so utter and irreparable should be their destruction. The city and people should be broken like this vessel, and the spot whereon they stood be the place of execution, where so many should be slain, that graves should be wanting to bury them; yea, the city of Jerusalem should be as Tophet, and every house defiled with the corpses of the slain, and rendered filthy and abominable as that detested place, because of the idolatries which had been practised therein, and the incense which on their roofs they had offered to the host of heaven.

2. What he now spoke in the presence of the ancients, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, he repeats solemnly in the court of the Lord's house before all the people, that if they continue impenitent, they may be at least inexcusable. All the denunciations of wrath which God had spoken by Jeremiah were now ready to be executed on Jerusalem and on all her towns, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words; obstinately persisting in their iniquities, and deaf to all admonition. Note; (1.)

Ministers must deliver their own souls, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. (2.) They who harden their hearts against God's warnings, must perish without remedy. (3.) In the day of judgment the damned will only have themselves to blame, and the sense of their wilfulness will aggravate their misery.

CH A P. XX.

*Ver. 1. Now Pashur, the son of Immer]* Pashur was not the immediate son of Immer, but of Melchiah, as it is expressly mentioned in 1 Chron. ix. 12. and hereafter, chap. xxi. 1. Immer was one of his predecessors, and head of the sixteenth sacerdotal class; 1 Chron. xxiv. 14. Pashur was not high-priest, as some of the ancients have thought, but captain or overseer of the temple. In this capacity, he had power to arrest and put in prison the false prophets, and those who caused any disturbance in the temple. This appears from what Shemaiah afterwards is said to have written to Zephaniah, the son of Maaseiah, who had the same post under king Zedekiah, as Pashur, chap. xxix. 25—27. namely, that the Lord had appointed him head or overseer of his house, in the place of Jehoiada, that he might arrest and imprison all who feigned themselves to be men inspired, and prophets. Under the reign of Josiah, Hilkiah exercised the high-priesthood; 2 Kings, xxii. 4, 8, 10. xxiii. 4, 24. 2 Chron. xxiv. 14. so that Pashur was not high-priest. In the temple, as in the palace of a great prince, there were the same officers, the same order, the same service in proportion, as was observed in the court of the kings of Judah. The overseer of the temple is the same with those who are so often called *chief-priests* in the Gospel. Matt. xxvii. 47, &c. Luke, xxii. 4, &c. This chapter is a continuation of the foregoing. Pashur thought that Jeremiah's discourse, which spoke too plainly of the overthrow of Jerusalem, and of the miseries which should befall it, deserved that he should be arrested and put in

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irons,

and put him in the stocks that *were* in the high gate of Benjamin, which *was* by the house of the LORD.

3 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, the LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib.

4 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword.

5 Moreover, I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and

all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon.

6 And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house, shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

7 ¶ O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.

8 For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily.

irons, to hinder him from speaking thus freely; and accordingly he treats him as they treated the false prophets. See Calmet.

Ver. 2. *And put him in the stocks*] Houbigant renders the whole verse, *This Pashur apprehended Jeremiah the prophet, and put him into the prison which lieth near the upper gate of Benjamin, which is near, &c.* Our translators have rendered *המאפכת* *hammahpeketh*, - the stocks; but I think without sufficient ground; for the word, which properly signifies that instrument of punishment, is *סד* *sad*, see Job, xiii. 27. xxxiii. 11. The word *המאפכת* *hammahpeketh*, occurs twice besides; chap. xxix. 26. and 2 Chron. xvi. 10.; in both which places it is rendered simply a prison; and is mentioned as a punishment due to or inflicted on one, who assumed the character of a prophet without a proper call, or was presumed to have behaved unbecomingly as such.

Ver. 3. *Magor-missabib*] That is, *Terror to all around*, as the name is explained, according to the usual method in the next verse.

Ver. 5. *Moreover, I will deliver, &c.*] It will, I think, tend much to illustrate this passage, and the corresponding conduct of the Babylonian monarch, related 2 Kings, xxiv. 12—17. if I here cite the words of a celebrated modern historian, who describes the similar behaviour of those Barbarians, the Moguls or Tartars, who under Zingis overran and conquered Asia, to their captives, in the following manner:—"The inhabitants, who had submitted to their discretion, were ordered to evacuate their houses, and to assemble in some plain adjacent to the city, where a division was made of the vanquished of three parts. The first class consisted of the soldiers of the garrison, and of the young men capable of bearing arms; and their fate was instantly decided; they were either enlisted among the Moguls, or they were massacred on the spot by the troops, who, with pointed spears and bended bows, had formed a circle round the captive multitude. The second class, composed of the young and beautiful women,

of the artificers of every rank and profession, and of the more wealthy or honourable citizens, from whom a private ransom might be expected, was distributed in equal or proportionable lots. The remainder, whose life or death was alike useless to the conquerors, were permitted to return to the city; which in the meanwhile had been stripped of its valuable furniture, and a tax was imposed on those wretched inhabitants for the indulgence of breathing their native air."

Ver. 7. *O Lord, thou hast deceived me, &c.*] *Over-persuaded me, and I was over-persuaded.* Our translation here is harsh and faulty. The occasion of the words was this: The prophet had met with a large share of ill-usage from an ungrateful people, in return for the faithful discharge of his prophetic office. Under these his calamitous circumstances, he looks up to God, and appeals to him, the searcher of hearts, as his witness, that it was not through any ambition of his own that he had entered upon that invidious office; see chap. i. 6, 7, &c. nor had he taken upon him of his own accord to reprove his countrymen: but all that he had done in that affair was pursuant to a divine cause, and in pure obedience to divine command. He would gladly have declined it, but God would not suffer him; wherefore hereupon he says, speaking to the Almighty, *Thou hast over-persuaded me, and I was over-persuaded; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed.* The passage carries in it a lively idea of the prophet's great modesty and profound humility, in not affecting high things or shining offices; but submitting, however, to the burden of them in obedience to the will of God. See Waterland's Script. Vind. part. iii. p. 84.

Ver. 8. *For since I spake*] *For as often as I speak, whether I cry out against injustice, or proclaim devastation, the word of JEHOVAH is turned against me into matter of reproach and derision continually.* Houbigant renders it, *For since I spake, and cried against iniquity, and denounced desolation, the word of the Lord, &c.*

9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But *his word* was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not *stay*.

10 ¶ For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, *say they*, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, *saying*, Peradventure he will be inticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

11 But the LORD *is* with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: *their* everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

12 But, O LORD of Hosts, that triest the

righteous, *and* seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.

13 Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil-doers.

14 ¶ Cursed *be* the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.

15 Cursed *be* the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee; making him very glad.

16 And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noon-tide;

17 Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my

*Ver. 9. Then I said, I will not make mention of him] But when I say, I will not make mention of it—then it becomes in my heart, &c. So it is said of St. Paul, that his spirit was stirred in him; and again, that a necessity was laid upon him to preach the Gospel. See Acts, xvii. 16. 1 Cor. ix. 16. Elihu, in Job, speaks of the spirit constraining him: see Job, xxxii. 18, 19. and Virgil's Æneid, vi. ver. 77. Indeed, no heat is so raging and insupportable, as that in the bosom of an honest man, upon the doing of any thing which he ought not to have done, or refraining from that which his conscience informs him he ought to do.*

*Ver. 10. Fear on every side, &c.] The Hebrew is, מנוח מסביב Mager-missabib, the name which Jeremiah gave to Pashur; and if it were here read as a proper name, as in ver. 3. it would appear more plainly to point at the persecutions which the prophet endured from him. Houbigant renders the remainder of the verse thus; The men with whom I was at peace, watching at my side, and saying, Take care to inform us by what means he may be deceived, that we may seize him by craft, and take our revenge on him.*

*Ver. 11. As a mighty terrible one] As a warlike hero.*

*Ver. 14, 15. Cursed be the day, &c.] See the note on ver. 7. These verses are so like those in Job, iii. 3. that they seem to have been borrowed thence. The sentiments are the same, and the expressions not greatly dissimilar. The prophet, indeed, has filled up the ellipses, smoothed the abrupt style of Job, and extended his short distich into two distichs or pairs of verses, in which he himself much abounds. Hence we find that the imprecation of the prophet contains more of complaint than indignation: it is indeed milder, softer, more dolorous, and more especially adapted to excite pity; in which this prophet's peculiar excellence undoubtedly consists: whereas Job does not so much raise pity as excite terror. This lamentation is written in poetical figures, like the ancient funeral songs; in which every circumstance proper to raise the passions is mentioned; which therefore are not to be considered as*

so many expressions of indignation and malice, but rather of mourning and sorrow. See Bishop Lowth's 14th Prelection.

*Ver. 16. Let him hear the cry—and the shouting] An outcry—and the alarm of war, &c. Houbigant reads, Let him hear a cry in the morning, and vociferations or howlings at mid-day.*

*Ver. 17. Because] Because I was not slain in the womb, so that my mother might have been my grave, even the womb of her that conceived me, for ever.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, They who will be zealous for God, and faithful to men's souls, must expect to be abused and insulted. We have here,

1. The prophet smitten by Pashur, a priest, and a chief governor of the house of the Lord, probably the head of his course, or captain of the temple, see Acts, iv. 1. Hearing the prophet's discourse, or being informed of it, though his sacred character should have been a protection, and his own station and profession should have restrained him from such violence, he fell into a rage and struck the prophet himself to silence him, or commanded some inferior officer to beat him; and, to add ignominy to the insult, he ordered him to be set in the stocks, or prison, at the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord, that he might there be exposed, his person rendered contemptible, and his prophesies despised. *Note;* (1.) False prophets and worldly-minded priests have been ever the bitterest persecutors of God's faithful ministers. (2.) They who dare remonstrate against the iniquity of wicked priests and an abandoned people, must not wonder if even the formalities of justice are not observed to oppress them.

2. God's judgment upon this proud priest and persecutor, and the sentence on the land confirmed. In silent suffering the prophet all night submitted to his ignominious confinement; but on the morrow, when brought forth for examination before the sanhedrin, or discharged because

grave, and her womb to be always great with me.

18 Wherefore came I forth out of the womb

to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

no real charge could be supported against him, he has a revelation from God, which he denounces against this wicked man. The Lord had changed his name from *Pashur* into *Magor-missibib*, *Terror to all around*, importing the horror which would seize him and all his wicked adherents, when the Chaldean army should compass the city, and verify Jeremiah's prophecy. His eyes should see his dearest friends and relations massacred, his country enslaved by the king of Babylon, the people slain or carried captive, the fortifications of Jerusalem razed to the ground, the treasures of the kings of Judah given for a prey to their invaders; and himself, with all his house, should be led into slavery to Babylon, and die in that polluted land, with all his friends deceived by him, and to whom he had prophesied visions of peace. *Note*; (1.) God can soon make those who would frighten his prophets with menaces, a terror to themselves. Let every persecutor tremble at Pashur's doom. (2.) They who think by stopping the mouths of God's prophets to procure themselves ease, only bind on their sentence, and hasten their doom.

2dly, Jeremiah, though a good man and a true prophet, appears compassed with infirmities. What he suffered seems to have exasperated his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

1. He is tempted to find fault with God. *Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived*; either in not bringing on the judgments which God had sent him to foretel, or not protecting him from the insults of his enemies, as he had promised him, chap. i. 18, 19. But this was his impatience and hastiness: God will ever be found true, and never deceive those who trust in him. Or the words may be rendered in another manner, *Thou didst over-persuade me, and I was over-persuaded; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed*; silencing his pleas to be excused, by unanswerable arguments, and injunctions not to be disobeyed: and therefore, since he was at it were pressed into the service, he was ready to think it hard in God, that he should leave him exposed to such ill-usage.

2. He complains of the affronts that he met with, and the injuries that he received. *I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me*; and nothing wounds a generous mind deeper than scorn. But what hurt him more than any personal insults was, their contemptuous disregard of the word of God that he preached. They ridiculed the earnestness with which he delivered his message, and treated the charges that he brought against them, of violence and oppression, with derision at his preciseness; or the threatenings of the ravages which their enemies should make, with contempt and disbelief. He heard the vilest misrepresentations of his words and conduct, as seditious, false, and dangerous to the state; and his enemies stopped at no lies to blacken his character. *Report, say they, and we will report it*; ready to spread the most malignant aspersions, and, on the least shadow of offence, to accuse him before the governors, and procure his condemnation. For this purpose they set spies around him, who, under the guise

of most cordial friendship, watched for his halting, in hopes that he would be taken in some or other of the snares which they laid for him, give them a handle for accusation, and an opportunity to *revenge* themselves, in his destruction, for the threatenings which he had denounced against them. *Note*; (1.) Ridicule and contempt are the common weapons of infidels and ungodly men against the preachers of the truth. (2.) It is grievous to a pious soul to hear the word of God treated with levity and derision. (3.) The fairest professions often cloak the foulest designs. (4.) Neither the purest innocence, nor most consummate prudence, can protect us from malignant tongues, resolved to find or invent some cause of accusation.

3. Discouraged by ill treatment, he owns himself ready to give up his ministry. Since he despaired of doing any good, he thought that the might as well be silent, as exasperate them with fruitless rebukes. *Note*; It is a most discouraging thing to the preachers of God's word, to see their labours vain, and themselves rendered odious for their fidelity; but we must leave the event to God: our duty is, to persevere.

4. He resolves, notwithstanding, to go on, and trust God; nay, he was constrained to speak: *the word of God was as a burning fire in his bones*, which must have vent: or, *there was in mine heart as a burning fire*, such zeal for God, and love of men's souls, that he could not keep silence; and now his faith triumphs over his fears. *The Lord is with me*, and therefore their malicious devices shall be disappointed, and return in vengeance on their own souls; for he is *as a mighty terrible one*, strong to avenge, and jealous to return the wrongs of his insulted ambassadors. Therefore their persecutors will with shame and grief see their mischievous designs abortive, and *stumble* and fall into the pit that they have digged, covered with an everlasting confusion, never to be forgotten: and such shall be the end of all the enemies of God's church and people. *No weapon formed against them can prosper; and every tongue that shall rise up in judgment against them, he will condemn.*

5. He appeals to the heart-searching God for the goodness of his cause, and, conscious of his integrity, expects to see justice done him on his enemies, and vengeance poured on their devoted heads. *Note*; (1.) It is a comfort to us, when, in the sight of that God who trieth the reins, we can boldly appeal for our simplicity and sincerity. (2.) In all our sufferings it is a great relief to have a gracious God, into whose compassionate bosom we can pour out our complaints.

6. He rejoices in the confidence that God will hear and grant his requests. *Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord*; the few faithful in Zion are called upon to join in his thanksgivings, *for he hath delivered the soul, or life of the poor, from the hand of evil-doers*; he means himself, now rescued from the hands of Pashur; or, since he can by faith embrace God's promises, he exults in the performance of them as equally sure as if already fulfilled.

3dly, Dire is the change between the just-mentioned notes of praise, and the melancholy sounds which follow.

Some

C H A P. XXI.

*Zedekiah sendeth to Jeremiah to inquire the event of Nebuchadrezzar's war. Jeremiah foretelleth a hard siege, and miserable captivity: he counselleth the people to fall to the Chaldeans, and upbraideth the king's house.*

[Before Christ 589.]

**T**HE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying,

2 Enquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.

3 ¶ Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah:

4 Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that *are* in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and *against* the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city.

5 And I myself will fight against you with an out-stretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath.

6 And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence.

7 And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

8 ¶ And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

9 He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

10 For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

11 ¶ And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

12 O house of David, thus saith the LORD;

Some have supposed, that this is here recorded as the humbling acknowledgment of what passed in his mind during his confinement in the stocks or prison, from which sad prevalence of impatience he was now recovered, but remembers to his shame how ill he had borne it. He utters imprecations,

1. On the day of his birth, that ushered him into a world of misery. Instead of celebrating its return with joy, he regards it as ominous, and brands it with a curse.

2. On the messenger who carried the tidings to his father, and made him glad with the news that a son was born; he wishes that he might be destroyed as the inhabitants of Sodom, and be in perpetual terrors, as in the agonies of death, from some invading foe: an imprecation shockingly severe and uncharitable. Into such unbecoming extravagancies may passion, when prevailing, transport us, and leave us deep cause to repent their rashness, if we do not watch unto prayer.

3. He wishes that the messenger of his birth had been his murderer, &c.; wishes unnatural, as they were wicked and wilful.

4. He expostulates with God. *Wherefore came I forth out of the womb?* as if God had done him injustice in

bringing him into the world, *that my days should be consumed with shame*, exposed to a continued series of insult, derision, and contempt; and herein, to say the least, he shewed much, very much of human infirmity. Let it serve to warn us against such a hasty spirit; which is not only highly criminal before God, but makes us appear absurd and brutish, and must expose us to just censure from men.

C H A P. XXI.

*Ver. 1. The word which came unto Jeremiah]* Nebuchadrezzar having besieged Jerusalem a second time, under Zedekiah, the king sent to consult Jeremiah concerning the success of this war. This happened in the second year of the siege, in the year of the world 3415. There are some who think that the *Pashur* here mentioned was different from him who is spoken of in the preceding chapter.

*Ver. 4. And I will assemble them]* That is, "the Chaldeans, to destroy you with your own arms."

*Ver. 7. I will deliver Zedekiah]* See the execution of these menaces in chap. liii. and 2 Kings, xxv. We may just observe, that Zedekiah himself was not slain; but carried to Babylon, where he died, though his sons and his great men were slain by the command of Nebuchadrezzar: but



Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver *him that is* spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings.

13 Behold, *I am* against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, *and* rock of the plain, saith the

LORD; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?

14 But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.

but it is common with all writers to express that indefinitely, which is true of the greatest part of the persons concerned.

*Ver. 13. Behold, I am against thee]* Behold, *I am* against thee, *who sittest in the valley of Segor, in the midst of the plain:* Houbigant; who thinks that Jerusalem is here meant, which, like another Segor, was to be utterly destroyed. See his note. Bishop Newton remarks, that the Jews confided in the strength and situation of Jerusalem, as the Jebusites had done before them: yet how many times, says he, was Jerusalem taken, though it was a very strong place, and wonderfully fortified both by nature and art! It was taken by Shishak king of Egypt, by Nebuchadnezzar, by Antiochus Epiphanes, by Pompey, by Socius, and Herod, before its final destruction by Titus. See *Prophecies*, vol. ii. p. 120.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, When the danger is distant, many affect to despise it who tremble at its approach, and instantly fly to those ministers in their distress, whose warnings in their prosperity they disregarded.

1. Zedekiah is no sooner besieged by the Chaldeans, than he sends to consult with Jeremiah, under whose predictions he had refused to humble himself, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 12. and by the most honourable messengers intréats him to *inquire of the Lord* for them, to rid them of their enemies, and raise the siege; thus magnifying his mercy, and adding to his former wondrous works, manifested to Hezekiah in the like distress, 2 Chron. xxxii. 20, 21. *Note;* (1.) Many in trouble are willing enough to cry to God to ease them of their sufferings, who express little concern about their sins. (2.) They who have scorned the prayers of good men, will be glad of an interest in them in the day of evil. (3.) The gracious interpositions of God in behalf of the penitent and pious, are no precedents to embolden the hope of the unhumbléd.

2. A tremendous answer is given to the inquiry from Israel's God, who, though he disclaimed not the relation, and still had mercy in store for the nation, had decreed to give up the men of that wicked generation to deserved punishment. Therefore he informs them, that all their efforts against their enemies would prove unsuccessful, and their city be taken by the Chaldeans: that resistance was vain, since God was their enemy, whose wrath burned like fire against them, and whose outstretched arm would destroy them with a terrible destruction. The famine, pestilence, and sword should consume them; and when at last the case proved desperate, and the few that remained with their king attempted to save themselves, they should be seized and massacred without remorse and pity, by their cruel enemies who sought their life, and, having taken the

city by storm, would glut their bloody revenge for their resistance. *Note;* They who fight against God, rush on their own ruin; and there is no escape when the decree is gone forth; flight is then as fruitless as resistance.

2dly, The messengers being dismissed with this rough reply, the prophet is sent to the people,

1. To admonish them of the only way that remained of saving their lives, by surrendering themselves up to the Chaldeans, as inevitable ruin would be the consequence of persisting to defend themselves; God's wrath being upon the city, the devouring fire ready to seize its palaces, and whoever abode in it being doomed to perish by the sword, the famine, or the pestilence. A dreadful alternative! either an ignominious slavery, or a miserable death.

2. To warn their king and princes, and call them to repentance at the peril of their souls. In vain they boasted their descent from the house of David, who were so degenerate from the piety of their fathers: they should, as his successors, discharge the duties of their high station; *execute judgment in the morning*, speedily, not spending their days in sloth and luxury; and *deliver the spoiled from the hand of the oppressor*, against whom he cried for justice: this they had grievously neglected, and therefore God was about to visit them; nor should their greatness be any protection from the fire of his wrath. One moment's respite is yet afforded them, one warning more given them, in the hope that by an immediate return they may suspend, if not avert, the descending blow. *Note;* (1.) They who are entrusted with the administration of justice should be speedy as well as impartial in their decisions: the delays of justice are almost as intolerable as oppression. (2.) Faithful prophets will not fear great men's faces, but plainly rebuke their sins. (3.) The sins of rulers will be most severely brought to account, as their influence and example are most pernicious.

3. To confound the folly of the hopes which they entertained. They thought their city by situation, as well as art, impregnable; fortified by surrounding hills and craggy rocks, which rendered the approach of an enemy difficult; and therefore with confidence of safety they defied all invaders; *Who shall come down against us, or who shall enter into our habitations?* but what defence is available when God saith, *Behold, I am* against thee, since his vengeance awoke to *punish them according to the fruit of their doings*, their munition of rocks is levelled to the ground. In righteous judgment, the fire is kindled; and Jerusalem with all her palaces, like a forest, perishes in the flames. Woe to the sinner against whom this devouring fire of wrath is stirred up! who can dwell in everlasting burnings?

## C H A P. XXII.

*He exhorteth to repentance with promises and threats. The judgment of Shallum, of Jehoiakim, and of Coniah.*

[Before Christ 598.]

**T**HUS saith the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word,

2 And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sitteth upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates:

3 Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.

4 For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.

5 But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.

6 For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah; Thou art Gilead unto me,

and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited.

7 And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire.

8 And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city?

9 Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

10 ¶ Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.

11 For thus saith the LORD touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place; He shall not return thither any more:

12 But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.

## C H A P. XXII.

THE prophecy which follows to ch. xxiii. 9. was evidently delivered in the reign of Jehoiakim; for it speaks of his immediate predecessor as already gone into captivity, and foretels the death of Jehoiakim himself. It is likewise probable, that it followed immediately after what is said in the xixth and xxth chapters to have passed in the temple precincts; whence, as from higher ground, the prophet is ordered to go down to the house of the king of Judah. Compare ch. xxxvi. 12.

The beginning of this prophecy is an address to the king of Judah, his servants, and people, recommending an inviolable adherence to right and justice as the only means of establishing the throne, and preventing the ruin of both prince and people; ver. 1—9. The captivity of Shallum is declared to be irreversible; 10—12. Jehoiakim is severely reprov'd for his tyrannical oppressions, and his miserable end foretold; ver. 13—19. His family is threatened with a continuance of the like calamities; the fall and captivity of his son Jeconiah are explicitly set forth, and the perpetual exclusion of his seed from the throne; ver. 20—30. The name of Zedekiah is not mentioned, for obvious reasons; but he is, no doubt, principally intended in the two first verses of ch. xxiii. under the general character of those evil shepherds, who should

be punished for dispersing, instead of feeding the flock. In the six following verses, with which the prophecy concludes, the people are consoled with gracious promises of future blessings; of their return from captivity, and of happier times under better governors; of the glorious establishment of the Messiah's kingdom; and of the subsequent restoration of all the dispersed Israelites to dwell once more in their own land.

*Ver. 1. Thus saith the Lord*] This happened long before what is mentioned in the preceding chapter.

*Ver. 2. That enter in by these gates*] That is to say, the gates of the palace. The king was evidently at the gate of his palace, with his principal officers, when Jeremiah presented himself before him.

*Ver. 6. Thou art Gilead, &c.*] *Thou art to me as Gilead; thou art as the head of Lebanon; yet surely, &c.* That is, though thou art most precious in my sight, though as valuable for riches and plenty as the fat pastures of Gilead, and thy buildings as stately as the tall cedars of Lebanon; yet, unless thy princes and people reform, they shall become nothing but ruin and desolation." See the two next verses, and Houbigant.

*Ver. 10—12. Weep ye not for the dead*] "Weep not for Josiah, for he is buried in peace, and taken away from the evil to come; but rather lament his successor Jehoiakim." "ahaz,

13 ¶ Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; *that* useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;

14 That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows, and *it is* ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.

15 Shalt thou reign, because thou clovest *thyself* in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, *and* then *it was* well with him?

16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then *it was* well *with him*: *was* not *this* to know me? saith the LORD.

17 But thine eyes and thine heart *are* not

but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do *it*.

18 Therefore, thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory!

19 He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

20 ¶ Go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages: for all thy lovers are destroyed.

21 I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; *but* thou saidst, I will not hear. *This hath been*

“ahaz (who is here called *Shallum*), whom Pharaoh Necho hath carried captive into Egypt, whence he shall never return.” It is not easy to conjecture why he is called *Shallum*. Some suppose, that this name was given him by way of reproach, because of the shortness of his reign, in which he resembled king Shallum, mentioned 2 Kings, xiii. as Jeconiah is called *Coniah* by way of contempt, ver. 24.

Ver. 13, 14. *Woe unto him that buildeth, &c.*] The prophet proceeds to denounce God's judgments against Jehoiakim, who had built himself a stately palace in those calamitous times, and took no care to pay the wages of his workmen, but supported his own luxury by oppressing those who were to live by their labour. See Levit. xix. 13. We may observe, respecting these upper chambers, that there was generally but one hole or window which looked towards the temple. The meaning of this place, which was spoken of a king, is, “If a man shall raise up to himself a vast and stately pile of building, and proportionably erect an upper room to my honour and service, and cut me out a window towards the place of my sanctuary, and ceil it with vermilion, yet if this be done by oppression and unrighteousness, woe be to that man and his magnificence!” See Gregory's Works, p. 13. Mark, xiv. 15. and Judg. iii. 20. The author of the *Observations* remarks, that the chief and most ornamented apartments of the palace which Jehoiakim set himself to build, are represented as upper rooms. “I believe (says he) none of our authors would express themselves after this manner; the lower rooms would be the chief objects of their attention. It was perfectly natural, however, in Jeremiah, there is reason to think; for the chief rooms of the houses of Aleppo, at this day, are those above; the ground-floor there being principally made use of for their horses and chariots.” See *Observations*, p. 95. and Amos, ix. 6.

Ver. 15. *Shalt thou reign, because thou clovest thyself in cedar?*] *Because thou frettest thyself in cedar?* מתחרה *methachareh* from חרה *charah*, to fret and grieve, signifies one

that is a prey to the uneasy passions of discontent and remorse. The question, therefore, is somewhat of a sarcastic nature, which asks, *Shalt thou reign, because thou frettest thyself in cedar?* As if it had been said, Is this the inestimable privilege of royalty, this the circumstance which constitutes thy happiness as a king, to carry continually about thee the pangs of guilt, anxiety, and remorse in a splendid palace? In like manner speaks Horace of

—miseros tumultus  
Mentis, et curas laqueata circum  
Tecta volantes\*. Lib. II. od. xvi. 10.

And it is obvious, how well this suits with the following context, which places in a striking contrast the happiness of the good Josiah resulting from the consciousness of having fulfilled the duties of his station with pious integrity. “Did not thy father eat and drink, that is, partake of all real comforts and conveniences which human life requires, in as great a degree as thyself? But at the same time governing with impartial justice and equity, he enjoyed in consequence thereof that solid and true felicity, which nothing but the practice of virtue, holiness, and religion, emphatically called “the knowing of God,” can bestow.”

Ver. 18, 19. *They shall not lament for him, &c.*] The prophet here repeats part of the funeral song, which the public mourners used to sing at funerals; indicating, that neither Jehoiakim nor his queen or family should be buried with those solemn lamentations, with which the memory of his predecessors, particularly that of his father, had been honoured. On the contrary, the prophet foretels that his dead body should be treated with great indignity, and should be cast out like the carcase of the vilest animal.

Ver. 20. *And cry from the passages*] *And cry to the passers.* Houbigant.

\* —neither wealth nor power control  
The sickly tumults of the soul;  
Or bid the cares to stand aloof  
Which hover round the vaulted roof

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Ver.

thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.

22 The wind shall eat up all thy pastors, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness.

23 O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail?

24 As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence;

25 And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand

of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

26 And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die.

27 But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

28 Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?

29 O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.

30 Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this

*Ver. 22. The wind shall eat up all thy pastors*] "All thy pastors shall find themselves mere wind and smoke; they flattered themselves with succours which they shall not find." By *pastors* he means *princes, kings, and great men*. Hosea makes use of the same manner of speaking, ch. xii. 1. *Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: "He satisfies himself with vain hopes."* The Chaldee, which is followed by many interpreters, renders the passage, *You pastors, you leaders, shall be dispersed by all the winds; shall be dispersed into all parts of the world; which well agrees with the next clause, Thy lovers shall go into captivity.* See Calmet.

*Ver. 23. O inhabitant of Lebanon, &c.*] The prophet apostrophizes Jerusalem, under the idea of a bird building her nest on the topmost cedars of Lebanon, on account of the sumptuousness of her palaces, and the advantage of her situation. Instead of *how gracious shalt thou be*, Houbigant and many others have it, *how shalt thou groan*.

*Ver. 24. Though Coniah, &c.*] Houbigant reads *Jeconiah* instead of *Coniah*. See the note on ver. 11. The expression *though he were the signet, &c.* is proverbial, and signifies, "Though he were most dear and valuable to me, yet would I not spare him, on account of his iniquity." See Haggai, ii. 23. The ring was frequently worn in ancient days as a mark of sovereignty. When Alexander died, he gave his ring to Perdiccas, thus as it were marking him out for a successor.

*Ver. 27. Whereunto they desire*] *To which they have set their hearts, or souls, to return.*

*Ver. 28. Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol?*] *Potsherd?* Houbigant, who renders the latter clause, *that they have cast out him and his seed into a land, &c.* "Would any one have thought that this man, who was invested with royal dignity, should be rendered no better than a broken image of royalty, a mere potsherd, utterly contemptible and useless?"

*Ver. 29. O earth, &c.*] See ch. vii. 4.

*Ver. 30. Write ye this man childless—*] I cannot agree with the generality of commentators, who suppose that God hereby declares it as a thing certain, and as it were

orders it to be inserted among the public acts of his government, that Jeconiah should die absolutely childless. Other parts of Scripture positively assert him to have had children, 1 Chron. iii. 17, 18. Matt. i. 12. And both ver. 28. and the subsequent part of this verse imply that he either had, or should have seed. But the historians and chroniclers of the times are called upon, and directed to set him down childless; not as being literally so, but yet the same to all intents and purposes of public life; for he was to be the last of his race that should sit upon the throne of David; and his descendants were no more to figure as kings, but to be reduced to the rank and obscurity of private persons. And in this sense the prophecy was actually fulfilled; for, allowing Zerubbabel, who is called governor of Judah, Hagg. i. 1. to have been a lineal descendant of Jeconiah, yet he could not be said to sit upon the throne of David, and reign, or rule, in Judah, seeing he was but a provincial governor, a mere servant to the king of Persia, in whom the sovereignty resided; nor were any of those kings who afterwards reigned in Judah, even of the family of David, until the time of Christ, who, though of David's seed, was not the seed of Jeconiah, but descended from the same ancestor in a collateral line.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Kings are God's vicegerents, and accountable to him for their conduct; and when they abuse the power wherewith they are entrusted, or neglect the duties of their station, they may expect his rebukes. Jeremiah is here sent to the king of Judah, Jehoiakim the successor of David, and sitting on his throne, but grievously degenerated from his virtues. He and his servants are summoned to attend.

1. Their duty is set before them: to administer judgment with impartiality; to vindicate the oppressed and injured; to do no wrong themselves, nor permit others to do it with impunity; to protect the stranger, the fatherless, and widow; and shed no innocent blood, either by lawless violence, or under the cloak of justice. Very opposite to which had hitherto been their conduct.

N

2. This

man childless, a man *that* shall not prosper in his days? for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

2. This would secure their prosperity, and entail a blessing upon their posterity; preserving long the crown of Judah to the royal race of David, and enabling them to live in splendor answerable to their high dignity.

3. On the contrary, if they persisted in their disobedience, God, by an oath, to make the sentence more awful and tremendous, swears to make the house of the king of Judah a desolation, and that his kingdom should be involved in his ruin. Though *thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon*, full of riches, and strongly fortified, yet such ravages should be made in the land, that it should be wholly depopulated, and its fertile plains become a howling wilderness: nor should instruments be wanting to execute the threatened vengeance; *I will prepare, or justify destroyers, raise them up, and give them a commission of most righteous judgment*: in consequence of which, they shall as easily cut down and destroy the mighty men of Judah, as the cedars fall before the axe of the hewer, and are cast into the fire. With astonishment the neighbouring nations behold the destruction, and inquire into the cause, that a people once so favoured of Jehovah should now be so abandoned; and the answer is ready, because they have apostatized from the worship of Jehovah, and sunk into foul idolatry. *Note*; They who forsake God are justly forsaken of him.

2dly, Kings are not too high for God to humble, nor for his prophets to reprove. We have here the sad doom of two read, who reigned successively in Judah, the sons of good Josiah, from whose steps they shamefully departed.

1. Shallum, the same as Jehoahaz, the immediate successor of Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 1. After a short reign of three months, see 2 Kings, xxiii. 34. he was carried captive into Egypt, and thence he must, by the divine decree, never return, but die in ignominy. Him, therefore, the people are called upon to bewail, and rather to weep over the captive son, than bedew with their tears the corpse of his pious father, who was at rest, and removed from beholding the evil to come. *Note*; Dying saints may be justly envied, while living sinners are to be pitied.

2. Jehoiakim his successor has not a more favourable judgment. His sins were great; and, though he now sat on his throne, the prophet faithfully dares to rebuke him. *Proud*, and affecting to rival the greatness of his most illustrious predecessors, during the most flourishing state of their kingdom; though himself no better than a viceroy, first to the king of Egypt, and then to the Babylonish monarch, he was building or enlarging his palace in the most magnificent taste, and with the most expensive decorations; and as the revenues of his kingdom probably were insufficient, he became *tyrannical and oppressive*, extorting money from his subjects, or constraining them to serve and supply him with materials, without paying them for their labour. *Secure, and self-confident*, he promised himself many long years to enjoy his house of cedar, and that his pomp would be his protection: *unjust and cruel* withal, unlike his pious father, who lived in sobriety and

temperance, and administered justice with impartiality. *Was not this to know me? saith the Lord*; it shewed true regard to God, and consequently was attended with the divine blessing; *then it was well with him*. But he with harpy talons stopped at no violence to gratify the insatiate covetousness of his heart, and shed the blood of the innocent, that he might seize their substance. In consequence of which his doom is read: he shall die unlamented; neither his subjects nor relations shall express the least concern for his fate; his corpse shall not have a tear dropped over it, and even want a grave, *buried with the burial of an ass; drawn with ignominy, and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem*; which, though not observed in the history of the kings, was no doubt literally accomplished.

*Note*; (1.) That great men should dwell in palaces, is becoming; but when pride rears the structure, condemnation lies against the soul. (2.) The chambers built by wrong will cry out for vengeance against the oppressor; and God will not let the defrauded labourer's complaint pass by unheard. (3.) They who place dependence on prosperity, and the enjoyment of the fruits of iniquity, will find their hopes terribly disappointed. (4.) Covetousness is the root of all evil: hence spring rapine, bloodshed, and every evil work. (5.) The way to prosper is to know God, and serve him; while destruction inevitable must be the portion of those who forget and forsake him. (6.) It is an aggravation of sin to have lived under pious parents, and in the face of their instructions and examples to prove rebellious. (7.) They who are lifted up the highest in pride, will shortly fall the lowest in misery.

3dly, We have line upon line, and warning upon warning, yet all insufficient to alarm a stupid people.

1. Their misery and distress are painted in lively colours. When their enemies were advancing, they are represented as running to the mountain-tops, and calling out for help to the neighbouring nations; but in vain; *for all thy lovers are destroyed*, and none willing to shew them the least kindness in the day of their calamity. They had been deaf to the warnings of the prophets, from the day when they came out of Egypt, and disobedient to the voice of God; vain of their prosperity, and confident that they should never be removed. But now their desolation approaches, when they should be *abashed and confounded for all their wickedness*; as destitute of help within, as of assistance from without; because *the wind shall eat up all thy pastors*, the governors in church and state, kings, nobles, priests, and prophets, as weak to resist the Chaldean hosts, as stubble to oppose the furious whirlwind. Though lofty in pride as Lebanon, and dwelling in houses ceiled with cedar, these would be no security, but be food for the devouring flames; while from their enemies they might expect to find no favour, in the day when their deepest anguish should seize them as the pangs of a travailing woman. The words, *מה נחנת* *mah neichant*, *How gracious shalt thou be*, some render, *What favour wilt thou find?* others, *How shalt thou groan?* (see the notes) and intimates the desperateness of their case, which seems most agreeable to the context; though they may also be interpreted

C H A P. XXIII.

*He prophesieth a restoration of the scattered flock. Christ shall rule and save them. Against false prophets, and mockers of the true prophets.*

[Before Christ 598.]

**W**OE be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.

2 Therefore, thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.

interpreted of the effects which these judgments should have upon them, when their distresses should drive them in penitence to God, and they should find mercy with him in the land of their captivity. *Note;* (1.) Prosperity is a dangerous state: they who live at ease too often care not to attend the warnings of God. (2.) Creature-dependence will fail in the day of calamity. (3.) It is well for us, if what we suffer brings us at last in pangs of real repentance to God.

2. Their king's judgment is pronounced. He is called *Coniah*, instead of *Jecniab*, in contempt. His name is shortened, intimating that his reign should be cut short, and his regal honour depart from him. Doomed to a miserable servitude, God threatens to give him up into the hands of the king of Babylon, whom he feared, and who sought his life, with his mother and family; and, pining in vain for the land of their nativity, they should long drag their ignominious chain, and die in the place of their captivity. His pious fathers had been as a *signet on God's right hand*; so dear to him, and valued by him as the ring which bears the picture, or is the gift, of the person whom we love: but his ill conduct had cast him out of favour, and therefore God in high displeasure threatens that he will pluck him thence, and abandon him to ruin: and this his determination is irrevocable, confirmed with an oath: *As I live, saith the Lord*, who, since he can swear by no greater, swears by himself. *Note;* (1.) They are undone for ever whom God abandons. (2.) The greatest must not be too confident: they know not what strange calamities may await them.

3. All who beheld this monarch fallen would tauntingly say, *Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? Yes: so despicable is he grown, who late was idolized. Is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure?* he that was late the people's darling, is now disregarded, and cast by as a broken vessel; led, with all that pertained to him, into a strange land, there to suffer the punishment of his iniquities.

4. The earth is summoned to mark his judgment: either the people of Judah in particular, or of the world in general: or, as if the clod under their feet would be more attentive than the hardened hearts of the men of that generation, it is called upon to hear the solemn

3 And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

4 And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.

5 ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

sentence. *Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; after a short reign of three months, he spent his whole life in captivity in Babylon: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.*

C H A P. XXIII.

*Ver. 1. Woe be unto the pastors, &c.]* To the kings and officers of the princes, who abused their authority by oppressing the poor. This is a sequel to the preceding discourse, principally addressed to the princes of Judah, the sons and successors of Josiah.

*Ver. 5. Behold, the days come, &c.]* After having foretold the return of the Jews from captivity, the prophet here delivers a lively prediction of the Messiah, of whom the Jews themselves interpret this passage. After the captivity, when the kingdom of David failed, Zechariah (chap. iii. 8.) taught them to look for the appearance of God's servant, *the Branch*. In virtue of these promises, the people still expected the coming of the Messiah, till Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, and the prophet also, declared that they were completed in the conception of Jesus Christ, when, through the *tender mercies of God, the Day-spring from on high visited them*, Luke, i. 68. 78. The Hebrew word by which Christ is denoted under the image of a *branch*, צֶמַח *tzemach*, is rendered by the Greek word *αυτολην* in the LXX.; and, *αυτολην* signifying both a *branch* and the *day-spring*, is the reason why Zechariah is introduced as varying the expression, though indeed it might have been rendered *branch*: the Greek word *ανατολη* was applied to the Messiah, by the Greek Jews, before our Saviour's time. From them the Latin Jews called him *Orie*, from whom the Gentiles at Rome learned the name, without knowing the reason of it. Though this term was originally applied to Solomon, it was not exhausted in him, nor indeed in any of his successors; for, as it was renewed by Jeremiah in this chapter, and by Zechariah in the place above quoted, so the completion was still looked for by the son of Sirach in the beginning of the Greek monarchy, and believed by the Jews, at the time when our blessed Saviour raised Lazarus from the dead. The character in the latter part of the verse, *He shall execute judgment, &c.*

6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

7 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

8 But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

9 ¶ Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.

10 For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up,

and their course is evil, and their force is not right.

11 For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.

12 Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

13 And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.

14 I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.

15 Therefore, thus saith the LORD of Hosts

is also given by the Psalmist and the prophet Isaiah to the Messiah; because his laws are the most perfect rule of righteousness, and himself the most impartial rewarder of every man according to his works. See. ch. xxxiii. 15, &c. Bishop Chandler's Defence, and Houbigant's note on the place.

*Ver. 6. In his days Judah shall be saved*] This prophecy is in part fulfilled in all true believers,—the mystical *Israel*, but will receive its utmost completion when the Jewish nation shall be restored; a blessing foretold by most of the ancient prophets, who generally joined Judah and Israel together, as equal sharers in the blessing, being no longer two but one kingdom: and the great Author of this restoration and peace shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS: that is, He shall be the Jehovah, or true God, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and our righteousness, or the great and only means of our justification before God.

*Ver. 7, 8. Therefore, behold, &c.*] See ch. xvi. 14. "One proverb shall give way to another, when the greater deliverance shall put the less out of remembrance. This wonderful work of God, in restoring the Jewish nation after their dispersion in every part of the world, will so far exceed the miracles which he wrought in their deliverance out of Egypt, that the latter will not deserve to be mentioned with the former." St. Paul calls this restoration of the Jews *life from the dead*, Rom. xi. 15. that is, it would be a miracle as surprising as if a dead body was restored again to life. See Bishop Chandler's Defence.

*Ver. 9. Mine heart within me, &c.*] We have here a new discourse against the false prophets, with whom afterwards the priests are joined: Jeremiah declares that, upon a view of the evils with which they are threatened, he is in trouble and agitation like that of a man who has lost his

reason in wine; ver. 9—15. The words may be read, *As to, or concerning the prophets, my heart is broken within me, &c.* He then exhorts the people in the name of God not to listen to the words of the prophets that prophesied of peace, when evil was determined, and would infallibly take place, as would in time appear; and charges those prophets with speaking of themselves, and not from the divine commission, ver. 16—22. God asserts his omnipresence and omniscience; and reproves the audaciousness of the false prophets, who affected to place their own idle dreams on a level with the all-powerful and efficacious word of divine revelation; declaring himself against the several species of those impostors; ver. 23—32. In fine, he requires all sorts of persons to desist from an indecency in common use, of styling his word a burden; and threatens severely to punish those who in defiance of this command should continue to cast such a slur upon it.

*Ver. 10. For because of swearing*] Houbigant renders this, *Whose course is to evil, whose strength is to iniquity; therefore the land mourneth, and the pastures of the desert are dried up.* See his note. Others read, *Before the face of the curse the land mourneth.* Full of corrupted and idolatrous men, of false prophets, who dishonour God by their lies, and people who dishonour him by their worship of false gods, the whole land is become subject to his curse, and, as it were, mourneth and lamenteth under his displeasure. Others understand the expression *because of swearing*, to mean *perjury*, or swearing by the false gods.

*Ver. 12. They shall be driven on*] *Shall go astray, or be bewildered.*

*Ver. 13, 14. I have seen folly*] Jeremiah draws a contrast between the sins of the prophets of Samaria, and of Jerusalem, and pronounces those of the latter to be more enormous, because the former seduced the people by prophesying



concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.

16 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.

17 They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

18 For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?

19 Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.

20 The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

21 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

22 But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words,

then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

23 *Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?*

24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

25 I have heard what the prophets said, that prophecy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

26 How long shall *this* be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies? yea, *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart;

27 Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.

28 The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What *is* the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.

29 *Is not my word like as a fire?* saith the LORD; and like a hammer *that* breaketh the rock in pieces?

30 Therefore, behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.

31 Behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.

32 Behold, I *am* against them that prophecy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them,

phesying in the name of Baal; whereas the prophets of Israel pronounced their false prophecies in the name of the true God, and pretended that he was the author of all their impostures. The wickedness of their lives also reflected a dishonour upon God and his religion. See Calmet and Lowth.

*Ver. 18. For who hath stood in, &c.] But who hath been present, &c.* These are the words of Jeremiah to the false prophets, "Who of you, O false prophets, can boast of having really entered into the secrets of the Almighty? I will shew you very much the contrary. His fury shall burst forth upon you in a terrible manner; your own destruction shall shew the falsehood of your prophecy, ver. 19. then shall you comprehend the secrets, and enter into the designs of the Lord. *In the latter days ye shall understand my counsel perfectly,*" ver. 20.

*Ver. 23. Am I a God at hand, &c.] This verse is well explained by the next: "Do you think that I regard heavenly things only, and not those of the earth?—on*

"the contrary, I fill both heaven and earth; each of them alike subject to my providence and care."

*Ver. 26. How long, &c.] How long shall there be among my people prophets who prophesy false things, and proclaim the deceits of their own heart?*

*Ver. 28. The prophet that hath a dream]* "Let him propose his dream to those who are truly inspired, that they may judge whether the dream is from God, and that they may not give out simple dreams and vain imaginations for true prophecies, mixing the chaff with the wheat, and confounding true revelation with the errors of a misguided spirit, ver. 29. *Is not my word like as a fire,* quick and powerful, capable of trying metals, as in a furnace, and ready to burn up that which will not bear the trial? And as *a hammer breaketh the hardest rock in pieces,* so is this word able to break down the confidence of the most hardened sinner." See Calmet.

*Ver. 30. That steal my words, &c.] Who hide my words, every one, &c.* Houbigant; who also renders the latter part

and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

33 ¶ And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD.

34 And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house.

35 Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken?

36 And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of Hosts our God.

37 Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken?

38 But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD, Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, the burden of the LORD;

39 Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence;

part of the next verse, *Who make their tongues soft, and utter smooth words.* See Pf. l. 16.

Ver. 33. *What is the burden?* See Isai. xiii. 1, &c. As the scoffers and infidels make a derision of this term, they are forbidden to mention it any more as ambiguous; and, instead of inquiring, *What is the burden of the Lord?* they are commanded to say, *What hath the Lord answered?* &c. See ver. 35. and Newton on the Prophecies, vol. i. p. 357. Instead of, *I will even forsake you,* we may read, *I will disburden myself of you.*

Ver. 36. *Every man's word shall be his burden* "Every one of you shall feel the weight of my vengeance, for the insolent discourse which you have pronounced. Your discourse shall be your burden, and the cause of your chastisements." Houbigant understands these verses somewhat differently; he renders the 35th verse thus: *Nor shall a man any more say to his neighbour, or to his brother, What hath the Lord answered, or what is his word?* ver. 36. *Nor shall ye mention any more the burden of the Lord; since every man's word shall be his burden: nor shall ye any more prevent the words of the living God, &c.*

Ver. 39. *I, even I, will utterly forget you* *I, even I, will bear you away like a burden, and I will throw out of my sight both you and the city which I gave to you and to your fathers.* Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet's message is a roll full of woes against a wicked nation, utterly corrupt both in its head and members.

1. He pronounces a woe on the *pastors* of Israel, their rulers in church and state, whose duty it was to have fed and protected the flock of God committed to their charge, but who had not only neglected to visit and take care of the sheep, but had scattered and destroyed them by oppression and covetousness; by their bad examples leading them into sin, and thereby bringing ruin upon them; for these evils God would visit them with righteous judgment. *Note;* They who have the rule over men's persons, and especially those who have the care of men's souls entrusted

to them, should remember the awful charge, and what a solemn account they must one day give.

2. Jehovah promises to take care of the flock which they neglected.

[1.] He will bring the scattered captives to their own land again, under the conduct of the shepherds Zerubabel, Nehemiah, and others, raised up by his providence, men faithful in their office, under whose government they should increase in numbers, build again the waste places of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, enjoy peace and prosperity, and no spoiler be permitted to devour them. Some suppose that this refers to gospel-times, when those who would receive the glad tidings of salvation should be gathered into the Christian church; when, under the ministry of the apostles and preachers, all true believers should be fed with the richest doctrines of grace, and filled with that divine faith and love which casteth out fear.

[2.] God bids them expect with confidence the coming of the promised Messiah. *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, swiftly advancing, and surely approaching, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch,* by which name the Messiah is prefigured, Isa. iv. 2. Zech. iii. 8. *A branch,* because of his mean appearance; *a righteous branch,* perfectly so himself, and the author of all righteousness to others; and *raised unto David,* unto whom God had promised that from him the Messiah should descend; *and a king shall reign and prosper;* for mean as his appearance was, his throne was higher than the kings of the earth, established from eternity, continuing to eternity. The kingdom he came to erect among men is an everlasting kingdom; victory and prosperity marked all his steps, the powers of sin and Satan were broken, and peace, love, and joy diffused in the hearts of all his believing people; *and he shall execute judgment and justice in the earth,* governing his people in righteousness, and executing judgment on their enemies. *In his days Judah shall be saved with a glorious salvation; and Israel, the spiritual Israel, shall dwell safely;* delivered from the power of Satan, the fears of guilt,

40 And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

guilt, the prevalence of corruption, enjoying the present favour of a pardoning and sanctifying God, and expecting a rest eternal in the heavens: *and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord, Jehovah, our Righteousness*: by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, he hath brought in an everlasting righteousness, and all who by faith apprehend him, are now made partakers of it; and, perseveringly cleaving to him, shall obtain everlasting righteousness, holiness, and glory, in the realms of eternal bliss.

3. The greatness of this salvation would so far obscure the former deliverances which God had wrought for his people, even their wondrous redemption from Egypt, that they should no more be mentioned. And this must refer, not merely to their return from Babylon, but to their conversion under the preaching of the Gospel, when multitudes were turned to the Lord; and may have yet a farther respect to the latter days, when, the fulness of the Gentiles being come in, all Israel shall be called into the fold of Christ, and literally be gathered, as many learned men believe, to dwell in their own land.

2dly, When God comes to visit, none will suffer severer vengeance than those whose duty it was to have stood in the gap against the growing evils; but who basely joined in the general defection, and hardened and encouraged sinners by their smooth prophecies and ill examples. Against these the prophet is sent to denounce God's wrath.

1. He appears deeply affected with what he saw, and the fearful message that he was about to deliver. *Mine heart within me is broken with grief, because of the wickedness that he beheld, and the ruin ready to ensue; all my bones shake with horror; I am like a drunken man, at a loss what to say or do; so confounded was he with the abominations that he saw, because of the Lord, whose name was so dishonoured, and because of the words of his holiness, profanely abused by those who pretended to inspiration from him; or because of the dire judgments which in righteous wrath he was sent to denounce against them.* *Note*; A true prophet grieves for the dishonour cast on God by men's wickedness, while he trembles at their approaching doom.

2. He declares the dreadful state of the whole land. *Full of adulterers, corporally and spiritually; full of swearers, perjured or profane, who, having cast off the fear of God, made no conscience of an oath. For these things God had begun to visit them; the land mourned already with drought, the pastures failed, and famine devoured them; and yet, hardened in sin, their course is evil, they attend not to these warnings of God, but run to the same excess of evil, and will not be restrained; and their force is not right; their power and influence were exerted, not to suppress, but to encourage iniquity; or their violence is not right, full of rapine and injustice, as well as adultery and profaneness. No marvel that such a people are devoted to ruin.*

3. They who should have restrained them, are the ring-leaders in sin. *For both prophet and priest are profane in their conversation and their lives; or play the hypocrite, pretend-*

ing zeal for religion, and with the cloak of piety covering the foulest abominations: *yea, in my house, where most peculiarly God required purity, have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord, defiling the sacred place with their false doctrines, their flagrant immoralities, or idolatry, 1 Sam. ii. 22. The prophets of Israel had been bad, very bad; God had seen their wickedness and folly; prophesying in the name of Baal, and causing the people to err by their words, and debauching them by their ill examples: but, bad as the prophets of Samaria had been, the prophets of Jerusalem have equalled, yea, exceeded them in their abominations. Horrible to tell! even in the face of God's temple they commit adultery, and walk in lies, reporting lying visions, making false pretences to prophecy, and turning the people from God to idols; hardening sinners in iniquity, crying Peace! to lull their consciences asleep in fatal security, profaning God's name to vouch for their lies, and by their wicked deeds encouraging and emboldening others to sin.* *Note*; (1.) No guilt so aggravated as theirs, who have not only their own blood, but the blood of lost souls lying upon them. (2.) Nothing so emboldens and hardens sinners, as when their teachers give them an occasion of offence by their ungodly conversation.

4. An awful threatening is pronounced against them. God regarded them as *the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah*, their guilt so great, and crying to heaven for vengeance: and swift it descends; *the Lord will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation.* The time is fixed, the judgment ready to seize them, *their slippery ways* shall lead them into horrible darkness, they shall not be able to foresee nor avoid the ruin that approaches, *but be driven on* by irresistible violence, captivated by Satan and their own lusts, *and fall therein* from the depths of sin into the depths of misery, led into a miserable slavery, or perishing with famine and the sword. The bitterest and most poisonous cup of affliction, wormwood and gall, *or the juice of hemlock*, a cup of trembling, is mingled for them, to punish them for their horrid profaneness, the contagion of which had spread over the land; nothing being so dangerously infectious, and so fatally destructive, as the example of a debauched and abandoned ministry.

5. God cautions the people to pay no regard to the lying suggestions of these false prophets. *They make you vain, bolster you up in false hopes, speak the fancies of their own corrupted hearts, not the visions of inspiration. They cry peace to the wicked, to whom God hath said, There is no peace; and promise them impunity when vengeance is ready to light upon them. Insulting and contradicting the prophets of the Lord, who affirmed that God's wrath was ready to be revealed, they ridiculed their pretensions to prophecy; or, boasting themselves of God's counsel, they vaunted their knowledge of his word and will; for who were so deep in his secrets as they? therefore, as the most effectual method of conviction, God will arise: Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury; the executioners of his judgments, the Chaldeans, with resistless violence are hastening to destroy; even a grievous whirlwind, it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked,* both

## C H A P. XXIV.

*Under the type of good and bad figs, he foreseeth the restoration of them that were in captivity, and the desolation of Zedekiah and the rest.*

[Before Christ 598.]

**T**HE LORD shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple

of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon.

2 One basket *bad* very good figs, *even like*

both on the deceived and the deceivers, but especially on the wicked prophets; nor depart from them till it has answered God's decree and purpose, and extirpated them from the land; and conviction will come too late, when the sentence begins to be executed; they shall then see what they will not now believe. Or, *in the latter days*, may refer to the times of the Gospel, or the final conversion of the Jews, when they shall consider all their past visitations, and be convinced and turned unto the Lord; though the former sense seems preferable, as more agreeable to the context. God, by these his judgments, made it evident, that *he had not sent these prophets; yet they ran without any commission from him, self-ordained, and pretending to prophesy when he had never taught them; but they palmed on the people the effusions of their corrupted hearts for his inspirations, and this was proved also from the effects of their ministry; for had they been sent of God, as they pretended, they would have made his word the standard of their preaching; and, as the blessed effects of their labours, would have beheld the conversion of men's souls turned by their preaching from the evil of their ways; the very reverse of which was evident.* Note; (1.) We need be often cautioned against false prophets; they are always more numerous than the true, and by authority and numbers seek to cast on faithful ministers the brand of falsehood; but by their fruits ye shall know them. (2.) No man may take on him the office of the ministry who is not called of God, and moved by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They who profess that they are, and yet are conscious of the falsehood of such declarations, God will not only disown, but fearfully punish. (3.) They who go forth in God's name, and pretend to labour for him, yet see no effect of their ministry, and no one soul brought to a sense of sin and the knowledge of reconciliation by them, may justly suspect that their doctrine is false, and themselves deluded.

6. God expostulates with them on their folly and wickedness. Do they think to deceive him by their lies? Can he, like man, a worm, only see the objects near him; and, because afar off in heaven, is he unable to descry what passes here below, and in the hearts of men? Vain hope! to think of imposing on omniscience, and evading his eye who filleth heaven and earth with his presence. The darkest recesses of the globe, or the darker devices of the human mind, are all naked and open to him; for there is no darkness nor shadow of death where any of the workers of wickedness can hide themselves. He heard and saw what these false prophets thought and spoke, he detected their impostures and lying dreams, which they reported as divine inspirations; and severely upbraids them with their hardened irony, *How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets*

*that prophesy lies? will they never have done with their lies? Or, as some read the words, How long will they go on thus? Is there any thing in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? No; their mind and conscience are defiled; yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, deceiving and being deceived, given up to their delusions to believe their own lie; and with most malignant intentions striving to debauch the minds of God's people to atheism or idolatry, as their fathers, by Baal's prophets, had been seduced before them.* Note; (1.) A sense of God's all-seeing eye is the great preservative from evil. (2.) They who would call off God's people, by pretences of new revelation, from the worship that he has prescribed, and the obedience that he has enjoined, evidently prove the falsehood of their pretensions.

7. The prophet, in God's name, lays down the criterion to judge the false prophets and the true. *He that hath a dream, let him tell his dream, and the event will prove whether it come from God: or this is addressed to the false prophets, warning them not to call it a vision from God, but report what they dream as a dream. And he that hath my word, a real and experimental knowledge of it, let him speak my word faithfully, without keeping back a tittle, however offensive or dangerous it may be to bear testimony to the truth. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.* As different as these are, so different is the word of truth from the vain imaginations of the false prophets; the one nutritive, substantial, weighty; the other light, vain, and delusive. *Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord: its operations quick, piercing, kindling a fire of conviction in the sinner's conscience; a fire of trial, separating the precious from the vile; a fire of love in the hearts of the pious; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? breaking the rocky heart of fallen man with deep contrition, and leading it to Christ; or stamping the hardened sinner to powder, denouncing upon him the vengeance of eternal punishment. So effectual and mighty was the word in the mouth of the true prophets; while the preaching of the false prophets neither communicated light nor heat, was accompanied with no power, nor produced the least good effects on the people.*

8. God charges them with other notorious crimes. *They steal my words, every one from his neighbour, either the words of the true prophets, which they introduced the better to insinuate their falsehoods; as if, mimicking their language, they also partook of their inspiration: or they prejudiced the people against them, and prevented them from paying regard to their admonitions and warnings. They use their tongues, and say, He saith, pretending a divine commission, and taking the name of God in their mouths in vain; or they smooth their tongues, prophesy what will please and flatter*

the figs *that are first ripe*: and the other basket *had* very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad.

3 Then said the LORD unto me, What seeest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

4 ¶ Again, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

5 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel:

Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for *their* good.

6 For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull *them* down; and I will plant them, and not pluck *them* up.

7 And I will give them an heart to know

flatter men in their sins, and dare to add God's sanction to their lies. They *prophecy false dreams*, imposing the reveries of their own brain for inspiration, and *cause the people to err by their lies and by their lightness*; their false doctrines and evil examples encourage sinners in their wickedness, and for these things God threatens them with his vengeance. *Behold, I am against the prophets*; three times he repeats it, to shew the certainty and terribleness of the wrath which they had provoked. He disowns the least connexion with them; *I sent them not, nor commanded them*; they were lying boasters, who had no commission from him; *therefore they shall not profit this people at all*, but, the very reverse, shall bring down destruction on their heads as well as their own. *Note*; None do more irreparable mischief in the church of God, than they who, pretending to be preachers of the truth, advance the doctrines of error, and beguile unstable souls.

3dly, It is evil indeed with any nation, when the most awful words of God are scoffed at, and made the object of ridicule.

1. One of the sins charged on the false prophets, priests, and people, is, their horrid profaneness. Instead of humbly inquiring concerning God's mind and will, they scoffingly repeated the prophet's words, and contemptuously inquired, *What is the burden of the Lord?* mocking the phrase as a cant term, because the true prophets often made use of it, and despising the judgments which this word usually imported; perverting thus *the words of the living God, of the Lord of Hosts our God*, contemning his power, and insulting his majesty, and though warned to desist, they persevered in their impious derision. *Note*; (1.) It has been the common effort of the wicked, in all ages, to make God's word the butt of their wit; and, by torturing some expression to a ludicrous meaning, to turn the warnings of his ministers into contempt. (2.) As long ago as Jeremiah, *the burden of the Lord* afforded matter of derision; he was one of those preachers of hell and damnation whom the men of that generation mocked at. Let such sinners then mock on, and fill up the measure of their iniquities. (3.) Wicked prophets and false preachers are usually chief in this transgression, and the great accusers and revilers of the saints of God; but that damnation which they deride slumbereth not.

2. God declares his full purpose condignly to punish such profaneness. *Every man's word shall be his burden*, lay on him a load of guilt, which, if unrepented of, shall sink his soul into the depths of hell. *Behold I, even I, that*

living God against whom such wretches dare open their impious lips, *will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you*, and give you up to your terrible doom, without one kind remembrance to alleviate your misery. The city which God had given them and their fathers should be a prey for the Chaldean army, and they be led into a miserable captivity; nor should their shame and disgrace come to an end. For a long while the whole nation should suffer the marks of his fierce displeasure, which to this day lies upon them; and the impenitent among them be sentenced to everlasting shame and contempt in the day of final recompence and perdition of ungodly men. *Note*; (1.) However men may mock at God's word, it will be seen at last whose word shall stand, his or theirs. (2.) The damnation which sinners despise shall shortly and terribly come upon them, and their laugh of derision be turned into everlasting weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

#### C H A P. XXIV.

*Ver. 1. The Lord shewed me*] This vision happened after the carrying away of Jeconiah, and under the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. The prophet himself sufficiently explains the meaning of the vision, in which two such baskets of figs were presented to his view as used to be offered up for first-fruits at the temple. The good figs signified those who were already gone into captivity; and the bad figs those who remained and were exposed to the second famine and pestilence.

*Ver. 2. Like the figs that are first ripe*] Dr. Shaw speaks of three sorts of figs; the first of which he calls the *boccure*, (being those here spoken of) which comes to maturity towards the middle or latter end of June; the second the *kermex*, or summer fig, which seldom ripens before August; and the third, which he calls the *winter* fig: this is usually of a much longer shape and darker complexion than the *kermex*, hanging and ripening upon the tree even after the leaves are shed; and provided the winter proves temperate, is gathered as a delicious morsel in the spring. Shaw's Travels, p. 370. fol.

*Ver. 5. Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge*] "As he who has figs in his garden acknowledges those of the first season as his, and as part of his property, and neglects the autumnal figs as having no taste, and fit only to be trodden under foot; so will I," &c. The Jews who remained in their own country, flattered themselves with being more beloved by the Almighty than their brethren who were carried away captive. To check this vain confidence,

me, that I *am* the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

8 ¶ And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt:

9 And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for *their* hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.

10 And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.

### C H A P. XXV.

*Jeremiah, reproving the disobedience of the Jews to the prophets, foretelleth the seventy years captivity, and, after that, the destruction of Babylon. Under the type of a cup of wine, he foreseweth the destruction of all the nations. The howling of the shepherds.*

[Before Christ 606.]

**T**HE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah

fidence, God promised to shew the latter particular marks of his favour in a strange land; and accordingly, we find that many of these, as Daniel and his companions, for instance, found great esteem and honour during their captivity. See chap. xxix. 17. Lowth and Houbigant.

*Ver. 6. I will build them, &c.]* Though this prophecy has its completion in part in the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, yet both this and the following verse will have their perfect completion only in the conversion of the Jews to Christianity.

*Ver. 8. So will I give Zedekiah, &c.] So will I render Zedekiah, &c.* Houbigant.

**REFLECTIONS.**—Though, in general, the prophet's word was rejected by the people, yet there were some who heard it, and to whom it was a favour of life unto life. And though, the nation's iniquities now being full, they fell into the promiscuous ruin, yet even in their captivity God will take care of them, and make even this most afflictive providence work for the good of the sincere.

1. The date of the vision is in the beginning of Zedekiah's reign, when Nebuchadnezzar had carried away Jeconiah the king, and the princes of Judah, captives to Babylon, and with them the carpenters and smiths; either to employ them in his own works, or to deprive the captive land of their assistance in making fortifications and weapons of war.

2. The vision itself consisted of two baskets of figs, placed before the temple; the one, vile and refuse, which could not be eaten; the other very good. The explication of which the Lord gives him.

[1.] The good figs were the captives gone into Babylon: these God promises to regard, to cause their captivity to issue for their good; those who were faithful should be improved in the furnace of affliction, and many who were otherwise till then, should be, through grace, wrought upon and led to repentance by the visitation. In consequence of which, the eyes of his favour should be upon them, they should be again restored and firmly established in their own land; and, better than all temporal good, the Lord engages to enrich them with enlarged spiritual understanding, and to bestow on them the best of blessings;

*I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord, by experience of his power, grace, and love exerted eminently for them, and exercised richly towards them; and they shall be my people, enjoying his protection, and taken into covenant with him, and I will be their God, their helper and defender, their portion, their exceeding great reward; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart, in simplicity and sincerity, ashamed of their backsliding, and unfeignedly penitent.* Note; (1.) The ways of providence are mysterious; what seemed the greatest affliction, proves often in its issue the most substantial blessing. (2.) God's hand is to be acknowledged in all our sufferings; whatever instruments are employed, we must say, *I became dumb, and opened not my mouth, for it was thy doing.* (3.) If ever we come to the true knowledge of God, we must consider it, as the gift of his grace; for without this, we can know nothing as we ought to know. (4.) Whatever our sins and backslidings have been, whenever through grace we have a heart to return unto him, we may be assured that his arms are still open to receive us.

[2.] The evil figs represented the remnant which were left in Jerusalem under Zedekiah, who, though they stood before the temple, yet were much worse than their brethren who had gone into captivity; for not the greatest sinners are always the first to suffer; God permits them to stand to fill up the measure of their iniquities, while he corrects his dear children with the scourges of paternal love: but their judgment advances; *surely, thus saith the Lord, the decree is gone forth, and the execution of it sure; Zedekiah and his princes, with the residue of Jerusalem, are devoted to destruction; nor should they, who fled to Egypt for shelter, be exempted, since thither the judgments of God should follow them. The sword, the famine, and the pestilence, shall consume them; and those who survive be doomed to a miserable slavery, worse than death; scattered into all lands for their hurt, where they shall have no intercourse to administer friendly consolation to each other; and being hardened, instead of repentant, under their sufferings, their yoke should be made heavy, and their persons despicable and odious; they should be a reproach, a proverb, a taunt, and a curse, in all places whither God would drive them; and this seems to have a* reference,



king of Judah, that *was* the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon;

2 The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,

3 From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that *is* the three-and-twentieth year, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.

4 And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear.

5 They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever.

6 And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me

not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt.

7 Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands, to your own hurt.

8 ¶ Therefore, thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Because ye have not heard my words,

9 Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.

10 Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.

11 And this whole land shall be a deso-

reference, not only to their desolations under Nebuchadrezzar, but also to look forward to their last more terrible destruction by the Romans; and the truth of the prediction appears verified this day in that unhappy people, who live under the evident curse of God, and the contempt of all nations whither they are scattered.

CHAP. XXV.

*Ver. 1. The word that came to Jeremiah*] This chapter contains a new discourse, different from that which precedes and follows it. The prophesy that it contains is prior in time to that in the former chapter, and posterior to that in the 26th. At the commencement of the reign of Nebuchadrezzar, Jeremiah denounced the evils which this prince was to bring upon Judah and the neighbouring states. The prophet reproves the Jews for their disregard of the divine calls to repentance; *ver. 1—7.* He foretells their subjugation, together with that of the neighbouring nations, to the king of Babylon for seventy years, and the fall of the Babylonish empire at that period; *ver. 8—14.* The same is foretold under the symbol of the cup of God's wrath, with which Jeremiah is sent to all the nations, which are enumerated at large, to make them drink of it to their utter subversion; *ver. 15—29.* And the like prophesy is the third time repeated in a strain of sublime and poetic imagery; *ver. 30—to the end.*

*Ver. 10. The voice of the bridegroom, &c.] The song of the bridegroom, and the song of the bride; the songs of the mill, and the light of the lamp.* By the songs of the mill, are meant the songs of those female slaves, who in ancient times used to grind at the mill. See Matt. xxiv. 41. The ideas in Rev. xviii. 23. are similar to those of our prophet; and the

general meaning is, that every voice of gladness and of business shall be silent; and the whole land depopulated, and universal desolation reigning.

*The sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle*] Mr. Harmer has an excellent critical observation on this place, which I cannot do better than present the reader with at large.

“The time for grinding their corn is the morning; which consideration makes the prophet's selecting the noise of millstones, and the lighting up of candles, as circumstances belonging to inhabited places, appear in a view, which no commentators, that I have examined, have taken notice of.”

“I am indebted to Sir John Chardin's Manuscript for the knowledge of this fact. It informs us, that “in the East they grind their corn at break of day; and that when one goes out in a morning, one hears every where the noise of the mill; and that it is the noise that often awakens people.”

“It has been commonly known that they bake every day; and that they usually grind their corn as they want it; but this passage informs us, that it is the first work done in a morning, as well as that this grinding of their mills makes a considerable noise, and attracts every ear; and as the lighting up of candles begins the evening, there is an agreeable contrast observable in these words: *Moreover I will take from thee the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of millstones, and the light of the candle. And their whole land shall be a desolation.* Gloominess shall be the silence of the morning, melancholy the shadows of the evening, no cheerful noise to animate



lation, *and* an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

12 ¶ And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, *that* I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

13 And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, *even* all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.

14 For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

15 ¶ For thus saith the LORD God of Israel

unto me; Take the wine-cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.

16 And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them.

17 Then took I the cup at the LORD's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me:

18 *To wit*, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse; as *it is* this day;

19 Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people;

20 And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of

“ the one, no enlivening ray to soften the gloom of the other. Desolation shall every where reign. In the East, where no millstones are heard in the morning, no light seen in the evening, it must be a dreary dismal solitude.” Ch. iv. Obs. 4. See also ch. iii. Obs. 18.

*Ver. 11. Seventy years.]* Not only the captivity and restoration of the two tribes were foretold, but the precise time of that captivity and restoration was also prefixed and determined by our prophet. This prophecy was delivered in the fourth year of Jehoiakim; and this same year it began to be put in execution; for Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judæa, besieged and took Jerusalem, and made Jehoiakim his subject and tributary; transported the finest children of the royal family and of the nobility to Babylon, to be bred up there for eunuchs and slaves in his palace, and also carried away the vessels of the house of the Lord, and put them in the temple of his god at Babylon. *Seventy years* from this time will bring us down to the first year of Cyrus, when he made his proclamation for the restoration of the Jews, and for the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem. This computation of the seventy years appears to be the truest and most agreeable to Scripture. But if we fix the commencement of these seventy years at the time when Jerusalem was burned and destroyed, their conclusion will fall about the time when Darius issued his decree for rebuilding the temple, after the work had been stopped and suspended; or, if we fix their commencement at the time when Nebuzaradan carried away the remainder of the people, and completed the desolation of the land, their conclusion will fall about the time when the temple was finished and dedicated, and the first passover solemnized in it. So that, as Dean Prideaux observes, taking it which way you will, and at what stage you please, the prophecy of Jeremiah will be fully and exactly completed concerning this matter. It may be said to have been accomplished at three different times, and in three different manners; and, therefore, possibly all might

have been intended, though the first, without doubt, was the principal subject of the prophecy. See Bishop Newton's Dissertations, vol. i. p. 201.

*Ver. 14. For many nations.]* For of them, *even* of these, shall many nations and great kings exact service; and I will render to them, &c. Houbigant renders it, For powerful people, and mighty kings, shall reduce even these nations to servitude; and so, &c.

*Ver. 15. Take the wine-cup, &c.]* Take the cup of the wine of this wrath. There can be no doubt that what is here related passed in vision, and that Jeremiah relates simply what was represented to his view; which, putting into writing, he sent to the several nations where God ordered him to publish it. See the note on chap. xiii. 4. Those circumstances which constitute the good and evil of human life are often represented in Scripture as the ingredients of a cup, which God, as master of a feast, mixes up, and distributes to the several guests, as he thinks fit. Hence when our Saviour asks his disciples James and John, whether they were able to drink of the cup which he was to drink of, he means, whether they had resolution and patience to undergo the like sufferings and afflictions as his Father had allotted for him. Matt. xx. 22. And in the like sense he prays, Matt. xxvi. 39, *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* Accordingly by this image of “ the cup of the wine of God's wrath ” we are to understand those dreadful and afflictive judgments, which an incensed God was about to inflict on the objects of his displeasure. And Jeremiah the prophet, who announced them, is considered as acting the part of a cupbearer, carrying the cup round to those who were appointed to drink of it; the effects of which were to appear in the intoxication, that is, the terror and astonishment, the confusion and desolation, which should prevail among them. See Bishop Lowth's note on Isai. li. 21. and compare Rev. xiv. 10. xvi. 19.

*Ver. 20. All the mingled people.]* To all the Abyssenes, or people

the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod,

21 Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon,

22 And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the isles which *are* beyond the sea,

23 Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all *that are* in the utmost corners,

24 And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert,

25 And all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes,

26 And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which *are* upon the face of the earth: and the king of Shephach shall drink after them.

27 Therefore, thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword, which I will send among you.

28 And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, Ye shall certainly drink.

29 For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of Hosts.

30 Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread *the grapes*, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

31 A noise shall come *even* to the ends of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations: he will plead with all flesh: he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD.

32 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

33 And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from *one* end of the earth even unto the *other* end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.

34 ¶ Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves *in the ashes*, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel.

35 And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape.

36 A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and an howling of the principal of the flock, *shall be heard*; for the LORD hath spoiled their pasture:

37 And the peaceable habitations are cut down, because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

people who passed from Arabia into Africa. Houbigant. See Boch. Geog. Sacr. lib. ii. cap. 23. Respecting Uz, see the note on Job, i. 1.

Ver. 22. *The isles, &c.*] That is to say, *The region about the Mediterranean sea.*

Ver. 24. *The mingled people that dwell in the desert*] *The Scenites or inhabitants of tents, who dwell, &c.* Houbigant. That is, the mixture of people dwelling in that part of Arabia called the *Desert*; consisting of Nabathæans, Amalekites, Midianites, and other nations, called in Scripture by the general name of *the children of the East.*

Ver. 26. *And the king of Shephach shall drink, &c.*] By *Shephach* is meant Babylon, as appears from chap. li. 41. Houbigant renders it, *And king Shephach, &c.* whereby, says he, Nebuchadnezzar himself is meant, who is spoken of under the name of *Shephach*, a king who reigned for-

merly in Babylon, and who was deified among that people. See Calmet.

Ver. 28. *If they refuse to take the cup*] “If they either do not believe thy threatenings, or disregard them, because they think themselves sufficiently provided against any hostile invasion, thou shalt let them know that the judgments denounced are irreversible.”

Ver. 30. *The Lord shall roar from on high*] The metaphor in the first part of the verse is taken from a lion roaring over his prey, (see ver. 38.) and in the latter from the triumphant shouts of the treading of the grapes. The meaning is, that he should pronounce and execute a terrible judgment upon the temple, the place that he had chosen for his habitation.

Ver. 34. *Howl, ye shepherds*] See ver. 30. By *shepherds*, as before, are meant the *princes* and *chief men*; and, pursuing

38 He hath forsaken his covert, as the fiercer of the oppressor, and because of lion: for their land is desolate, because of the his fierce anger.

using the same metaphor, the *principal of the flock*, signify the great and wealthy men of this nation, against whom these judgments are denounced. By a *pleasant* or *precious vessel*, is meant a crystal glass, or any other brittle vessel, which is easily broken by falling. Houbigant renders the latter clause, *For the days of your slaughter are fulfilled, and ye shall be broken in falling as a precious vessel.*

*Ver.* 38. *He hath forsaken his covert, &c.*] For who would have dared to approach it, if he had thought good to protect it? if Jerusalem, if the temple, if Judæa, are delivered into the hand of the Chaldeans, it is because He who guarded and protected them hath forsaken and abandoned them.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, This prophecy bears date in the first year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and the fourth of Jehoiakim; and it is directed to the people in general, probably when assembled at Jerusalem on one of the three annual feasts. If the princes will not hear, perhaps the people may; at least it will leave both inexcusable.

1. The prophet reminds them how long and how earnestly God had been exhorting them, by his ministers and others, to turn from the evil of their ways. Three-and-twenty years he had preached, from the 13th of Josiah, to the 4th of Jehoiakim, *rising early, and speaking diligently, constantly, faithfully*, while Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, had just preceded him, and Zephaniah was his cotemporary; besides many others whom God in mercy had sent to warn them, unwilling they should perish, and accompanying his admonitions with the most gracious promises. They are plainly told of their sins, and exhorted to repent of them; if they would return from their shameful idolatries, and from all their other evil works, then God's threatenings should not light upon them, but they should long and peaceably enjoy their good land. *Note;* (1.) God will remember against the sinner all the means of grace that he has abused, as one of his greatest condemnations in the day of judgment. (2.) They who are sent on God's messages need be earnest and diligent in delivering them, that they may at least be free from the blood of all men. (3.) God doth not strike without warning; but if we will not hear, we must perish.

2. The prophet upbraids them with their impenitence and hardness of heart. *They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear;* they would not so much as pay a moment's attention to the message, their heart was so averse to it; they resolved to abide in their sins and provocations, let the consequence be never so much to their hurt; and thus, as all impenitent sinners do, destroyed themselves.

2dly, The judgment is pronounced on the rebellious people of Judah, and their destroyers shall not go unpunished.

1. Judah shall be destroyed by the king of Babylon, God's servant in this behalf to execute vengeance on this devoted nation. Around his standard the families of the north are summoned, his victorious army marches, and desolation marks their way; Judæa falls; and all her

neighbours, so far from affording her assistance, are involved in the general ruin; and so terrible the ravages, that they shall be *an astonishment and an hissing, and perpetual desolations*: during seventy years that their miseries should last, the voice of joy be never heard in the city, no nuptial songs, no sound of mirth, no provision should be left, no candle burn in it, but melancholy silence reign; the land uncultivated, destitute of inhabitants, and swept with the besom of destruction. *Note;* (1.) They who will not be ruled by God's word, must be ruined. (2.) God often uses wicked instruments to chastise his own people; and they are made to do his work, when meaning only to aggrandize themselves.

2. Babylon, the destroyer of others, shall herself also, after seventy years, be destroyed for her *iniquity, her tyranny, pride, and cruelty* to God's Israel; and the land of the Chaldeans shall be made *perpetual desolations*, when all the evil pronounced by Jeremiah, chap. xlvii—li. shall come upon them; and as she hath served herself of other nations, subduing and plundering them, God will recompense her in kind, and raise up many nations and great kings, the Medes, Persians, and their allies, to lay her waste, and enrich themselves with her spoils.

3dly, Judgment begins at the house of God, but it spreads far and near. The neighbouring nations must drink of the same cup, and at last Babylon herself take it in turn.

1. The judgment is represented under a *wine-cup of fury*. The sins of all these nations had provoked God's wrath, and heavy it falls on them; like men intoxicated with liquor, without wisdom or might, they should become an easy conquest, and the sword of God devour them. Nor would their reluctance to submit to their doom avail any thing. The prophet is commanded to make them drink, denouncing the judgments of God, which would quite overwhelm them and sink them into ruin, from which they should never, or at least not for a long while, recover. *Note;* It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God: then all resistance is vain.

2. The nations who are the subjects of this prophecy are; first, Jerusalem and the cities of Judah: their sins being most aggravated, they suffer first. Egypt, on whom they placed dependence, next falls under the Babylonish yoke: then all the mingled people, the bordering nations; some, as Tyre and Zidon, that had been the friends; others, as Moab and Edom, who had been the inveterate foes of Judah, but now sink in the promiscuous ruin: far and wide the rapid conqueror spreads his arms, even to all the kingdoms of the then known world, at least to the whole extent of that great monarchy, which was termed, from its vast territory, universal. At last, the lofty queen of nations herself must be laid in the dust, and the king of Sheleach, or Babylon, must drink of the same cup, and perish as the kingdoms he had destroyed. It is added, *as it is this day*, in a parenthesis: probably that was inserted by Jeremiah, who lived to see the ruin of his country; or by him (whether Baruch or Ezra) who collected

C H A P. XXVI.

*Jeremiah, by promises and threatenings, exhorteth to repentance: he is therefore apprehended and arraigned: his apology: he is acquitted in judgment by the example of Micah, and by the care of Abikam.*

[Before Christ 609.]

**I**N the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, came this word from the LORD, saying,

2 Thus saith the LORD, Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word:

3 If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.

4 And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you,

5 To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened;

6 Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

7 So the priests and the prophets and all

lected these prophecies when the event had verified the prediction.

3. If God spares not his own people, let not the rest of the nations of whom they have learned idolatry, think to go unpunished. His determination is fixed, and the accomplishment of it is inevitable. *Note;* (1.) When God arises to judge, the greatest nations are but as stubble before the whirlwind. (2.) Wherever sinners are, however many, however mighty, surely they shall not go unpunished.

4thly, The sword threatened is Nebuchadnezzar's; but the war is of God, who clothes him with his power, and ensures to him the victory. The terribleness of the judgment is described.

1. The tremendous voice of God shall be heard from on high in mighty thunderings. He shall roar upon his habitation, the earth in general, or Jerusalem in particular; or out of his habitation, from the heavens, where he hath placed his radiant throne. *He shall give a shout,* as when contending armies rush into the battle, and as those who tread the grapes at the vintage; and so loud the sound, that the most distant realms shall hear, even to the ends of the earth.

2. Righteous vengeance shall seize the wicked. *The Lord hath a controversy with the nations* for their wickedness, and he will plead with all flesh, will bring them to his tribunal; and he will give them that are wicked to the sword; from nation to nation the judge shall go in circuit. *A great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth;* the Chaldean army first, then the Medes, afterwards the Greeks, and lastly the Romans, all God's executioners of vengeance; and those who fall by their arms are the slain of the Lord, from one end of the earth to the other. Unlamented they shall fall for want of mourners, or because their friends and relations are so occupied with their own danger that they are insensible to every thing beside; unburied they shall lie as dung upon the earth, and no compassionate hand be found to gather the scattered corpses and hide them in a grave.

3. The shepherds are called upon to howl for these horrible desolations; either the kings of the earth in general, or the rulers of Judah in particular, to whom the

words seem to be addressed. *Wallow yourselves in the asbes, ye principal of the flock,* in the deepest agony, most bitter sorrow, and hopeless misery, for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersins are accomplished, like sheep before the wolf, torn, worried, and dispersed; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel, irreparably broken in pieces. Then slight will be vain, and all hope of escape desperate. See chap. xxxix. 4—6. Shrieks shall ascend on every side, the heart of the mightiest fail, ruin and desolation universal be spread around, and even the peaceable habitations are cut down, the palaces where peace and plenty reigned; or, as is common in the ravages of war, they who lived inoffensively, and never provoked the scourge, share in the general calamity of the land, because of the fierce anger of the Lord, the cause of all these fearful judgments. *He hath forsaken his covert as the lion;* either God, going forth against the shepherds and their flocks to destroy them; or rather Nebuchadnezzar, roused up from Babylon; and the land is desolate, ravaged by his army, because of the fierceness of the oppressor, or oppressing sword, and because of his fierce anger; either the wrath of God or of the king of Babylon, rushing forth to the slaughter. *Note;* (1.) War is a dreadful scourge. (2.) The rulers, who were deepest in transgression, shall be chief in suffering. (3.) Woe unto the sinful soul against which God rises up as an enemy! May the judgments of others be our warnings, that we may hear and fear, and do no more wickedly!

C H A P. XXVI.

*Ver. 1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim]* This prophecy is prior in time to that in the preceding chapter. That was delivered in the fourth year of king Jehoiakim; and this at the beginning, or some time in the first year of his reign. See Calmet.

*Ver. 2. Stand in the court, &c.]* The great court, where both men and women worshipped when they brought no sacrifice; for when they did so, they were to carry it into the inner-court, called *The court of Israel*. Jeremiah frequently spoke in the temple, because of the great concourse of people in that place. It is also very probable, that he chose the days of the great festivals. See Lightfoot.

*Veri.*

the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

8 ¶ Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded *him* to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

10 When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house.

11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath pro-

phesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

12 ¶ Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house, and against this city, all the words that ye have heard.

13 Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

14 As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.

15 But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

16 ¶ Then said the princes and all the

*Ver. 6. Then will I make this house like Shiloh*] "I will forsake it, as I have forsaken Shiloh." See ch. vii. 12.

*Ver. 7. The prophets, &c.*] The prophets, as is manifest from many passages in Scripture, were an order of men among the Jews devoted to sacred literature, and qualified by their attainments in religious knowledge to advise and instruct the people, who came to consult them in cases of doubt and difficulty. They appear to have been trained in seminaries and schools under the direction of some prophet eminent for wisdom and piety, as those mentioned 1 Sam. xix. 20. were under Samuel, and those 2 Kings, ii. 3. vi. 1. under Elijah and Elisha. That they were numerous, appears from this circumstance, that when Jezebel slew all the prophets of JEHOVAH whom she could meet with, Obadiah hid a hundred of them, and saved their lives; 1 Kings, xviii. 4.: and afterwards there appeared no less than four hundred of them prophesying in that character before Ahab and Jehoshaphat, 1 Kings, xxii. 6. It is not to be supposed that these were all of them, or at all times, divinely inspired, but ordinarily gave their advice as men versed in the law and in the other Scriptures. Sometimes, however, they were enabled to answer those that consulted them by immediate revelation from God. And out of this body God generally perhaps chose those whom he sent as his ambassadors, and messengers extraordinary, to notify the designs of his providence, and to warn his people to repent and turn from the ways which displeased him. I say, generally, but not always; for Amos expressly says of himself, that he was "neither a prophet," meaning by profession, "nor a prophet's son," one bred up in the schools of the prophets; but an illiterate herdsman, when JEHOVAH sent him to prophesy unto Israel; Amos, vii. 14. But

neither did the sacredness of their character secure them from bearing a part in the general corruption of the times; on the contrary, Jeremiah in particular complains bitterly of them for having prostituted themselves to the worst of purposes, deceiving the people by false pretences, and being greatly instrumental in promoting the cause of impiety and wickedness. See chap. v. 31. xiv. 13, 14. xxiii. 14, &c. xxviii. 15. xxix. 8, 9, &c. See also Ezek. xiii. 2, &c. Micah, iii. 5, 11. Zeph. iii. 4. After a total cessation of prophecy, the Scribes, who are often mentioned in the Gospels, seem to have stepped into the place of the prophets, and by their acquired skill in the sacred writings, without any claim to supernatural gifts, to have taught the people, and instructed them in all matters of religious concernment. See Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

*Ver. 10. When the princes of Judah*] That is, the king's counsellors or chief officers of the state, who were also members of the Sanhedrin. By the *prophets*, mentioned in these verses, are meant the false prophets, who were extremely irritated against Jeremiah. The intelligent reader will observe a great similarity between the conduct of these priests and prophets towards Jeremiah, and in that of the priests, the Scribes and Pharisees, towards Jesus Christ, of whom Jeremiah was a type. See particularly Mark, xiv. 58. Matt. xxvi. 61.

*Ver. 15. But know ye for certain*] This is Jeremiah's justification of himself. He reduces all to the proof that God had sent him; and his adversaries were able to make no reply. "If God hath sent me, you can have nothing to say against me." It is upon this that he is declared innocent, ver. 16. *This man is not worthy to die.* See Calmet.

*Ver.*

people unto the priests and to the prophets ; This man *is* not worthy to die : for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.

17 Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying,

18 Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, Zion shall be plowed *like* a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

20 And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah, the son of Shemaiah, of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city, and against this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah :

21 And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death : but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt ;

22 And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, *namely*, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and *certain* men with him, into Egypt ;

23 And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king ; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.

24 Nevertheless, the hand of Alikam the

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*Ver. 18. Micah the Morasthite*] The village of *Morasthus* or *Maresa*, was in the tribe of Judah. Micah was the author of that prophecy which we have now among the twelve minor prophets. The Jews supposed his prophecy to have been fulfilled in the utter destruction of the second temple by Titus, when Terentius razed the very foundations of the city and temple, and by that means fulfilled the prediction of our Blessed Saviour, that there should not be one stone left upon another.

*Ver. 20. There was also a man—Urijah*] The discourse of the elders being finished, a history of those times is here added, and, as many think, by Jeremiah ; hence it was plain in how great danger he was under a wicked king. Others think that this example of Urijah was produced by the enemies of Jeremiah, to counteract what was said in his favour from the example of Micah. See Houbigant and Calmet.

*Ver. 24. Abikam*] *Abikam* was an ancient prince of Judah, who bore a considerable employment under Josiah. Compare 2 Kings, xxii. 12—14. *Gedaliah* was his son ; see 2 Kings, xxv. 22. who, as well as his father, had a great regard for Jeremiah. See ch. xxxix. 14. xl. 5.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, They who would be faithful to God in the discharge of their ministry, must set their faces like a flint, and be above the fear of man.

1. Jeremiah is sent into the courts of the Lord's house, where, on one of their solemn feasts, the people of the land were assembled out of the cities of Judah, and there, in the midst of that great congregation, he must deliver his message ; and lest their greatness, their multitude, or their known enmity against such faithful warnings, might daunt his courage, or warp him to palliate the severity of the threatening, he is charged not to *diminish a word*. When we speak for God, we must neither be afraid nor ashamed

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to declare his whole counsel, and resolutely abide by the consequences.

2. The purport of his discourse is, to advise them of the danger of their sins, and the purpose of God to punish them ; to exhort them to a speedy and unfeigned repentance ; to assure them that then God would turn away his anger from them ; but that if they persisted in their impenitence, disobedience to his holy law, and disregard of his divinely appointed ministers, the consequences would be inevitably fatal, and their ruin ensue ; Jerusalem with the temple, *like Shiloh* and the tabernacle there pitched of old, would be given into the hands of her enemies, and her judgment be so terrible, that it should be the deepest imprecation to say, *The Lord make thee like Jerusalem!* Now nothing here could give reasonable offence. God graciously waited ; he offered mercifully to receive them ; they had only to return to him, and then the message breathed nothing but peace and pardon : but they, who resolved to persist in their iniquities, could not bear to be told of the issue of them. *Note* ; (1.) There is nothing in the most terrible denunciations of wrath to quarrel with, especially when the gracious God previously condescends to make known to us these terrors, in order to lead us to pardon and everlasting peace. But, (2.) If men will not be warned, they must be damned.

2dly, The plainest and most reasonable admonitions, delivered with the tenderest affection, and urged with the most solemn weight of God's authority, have no effect upon the hardened sinner, but to exasperate his corruptions.

1. Jeremiah is arrested for his preaching, and dragged before the magistrates, that he may be condemned, and executed. The ungodly priests and false prophets, who in all ages and places have been the bitterest enemies and persecutors of the pious, arose, exasperated at what they

P

heard,

son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

heard, and the people, at their instigation, readily followed them; they seize the poor prophet, and threaten him with immediate death, either in the rage of pretended zeal, or by form of law. The charge against him is for falsehood, and blasphemous words spoken against that holy place, because in the name of the Lord he had said, *this house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant*. Such an uproar raised a vast tumult, and all the people ran together; the tidings of which soon brought up the princes from the king's house into the temple, and before them, as judges, the criminal is produced, at the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, where they sat to hear the cause. The false prophets and priests, whose hand was ever first in the transgression of opposing the ministers of truth, stand forth to accuse him, not doubting but to gain a verdict in their favour, appealing for the truth of their charge to all the people who had heard Jeremiah's discourse, and demanding judgment against him as most worthy to die. *Note*; They who will be zealous for God must sometimes put their lives in their hand. How often since this have the true preachers of Christ been in danger by tumultuous mobs, instigated by apostate priests!

2. Jeremiah vindicates himself from the charge, not by denying it, but by maintaining the truth of what he had spoken. The words were not his own. God had sent him, and how could he then be silent? Besides, the threatenings only affected the impenitent. So far therefore from desisting, he urges the admonition that he had given; *Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God*, who yet did not disclaim the relation, and was ready instantly, on their repentance, to reverse the threatenings issued against them. What was urged with so kind an intention surely deserved not punishment, but praise. However, he submits to whatever sentence they thought fit to pronounce, but warns them of the danger of shedding the blood of an innocent man, which would cry for vengeance; and the still more atrocious guilt of slaying a prophet solely for delivering the words which *of a truth the Lord had sent him to speak*, who would not fail condignly to avenge such a flagrant insult upon himself, as well as such cruel injustice done to his servant. *Note*; (1.) To preach boldly, and suffer patiently for well-doing, is the true spirit of a Christian minister. (2.) We must abide by God's word, nor ever recede a step, though the greatest loss and damage, yea, though death itself, threaten us for our fidelity.

3dly, God knoweth how to deliver his people out of temptation, and, when their case appears most desperate, to rescue them from the jaws of the lion.

1. Jeremiah is acquitted, notwithstanding the malicious accusations of his enemies. Such an evidence attended his defence, such a noble simplicity appeared in it, such approved fidelity, and God himself put such an awe upon the princes and people, that, though they strangely hardened their hearts against the admonition given, yet they own God's authority, and dare not condemn the innocent

prophet. *Note*; There are many on whom the word of God hath so far an influence, as to extort their assent to its truth, who nevertheless continue unshaken in their sins.

2. Some of the court, from among the princes, and perhaps with Ahikam at their head, rose up in the prophet's defence; and, as a precedent, quoted the case of Micah, who a little before, in the days of Hezekiah, had prophesied as severe things as ever Jeremiah had done; *that Jerusalem should become heaps, the city plowed like a field, and the temple utterly demolished; yet so far were Hezekiah and his princes from condemning him to death for his fidelity, that they trembled at God's word, besought the Lord, repented of their evil deeds; and this was the lengthening of their prosperity, God accepting their repentance, and withholding the threatened judgments. And such conduct, they insinuate, in the present case, would be most fit and becoming; whereas to act otherwise, in shedding innocent blood at the instigation of exasperated priests, incensed at having their pride, hypocrisy, and falsehood detected, would procure great evil against their souls, lay them under heavy guilt, and expose them to God's awful vengeance.* *Note*; (1.) The greatest men shew their wisdom in hearing and obeying the admonitions of God. (2.) The dreadful consequences of sin, if nothing else, should deter us from it; if we have little sense of its evil and malignity, the fear of hell at least should restrain us.

3. Another instance is quoted of a prophet put to death in the present reign, which some suppose to be a case in point urged by Jeremiah's persecutors in reply to the former, and in order to obtain his condemnation. Others, that it is the continuation of the same person's discourse, urging the guilt already brought upon the land by the murder of one prophet; and that to increase it, by a repetition of the like crime, could not but hasten their destruction. Others suppose that this anecdote was added by Jeremiah himself, or whoever collected his prophecies, as an instance of God's extraordinary interposition in the present case, when so lately, in the same reign, another holy man, Urijah, met his fate in the discharge of his office, and for the very same words which Jeremiah had spoken: provoked by his preaching, the king and his nobles sought to slay him; and, to avoid it, the prophet either prudently absconded, or rather timorously deserted his post; for men of real grace may at times be overcome with fear; though usually little is to be got by flight, as in the present case. Cowardice often exposes those to ruin whom courage might have extricated from danger. The king sent after him to Egypt, whither he had fled, got him delivered up as a state-criminal, and slew him, probably with his own hand, at least commanded it to be done; and, to make the ignominy the greater, and his prophecies the more disregarded, *cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.*

4. Notwithstanding all the pleas of his accusers, Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, 2 Kings, xxii. 12. a man who had lived



## C H A P. XXVII.

*Under the type of bonds and yokes, he prophesieth the subduing of the neighbour kings unto Nebuchadnezzar: he exhorteth them to yield, and not to believe the false prophets: the like he doeth to Zedekiah: he foretelleth that the remnant of the vessels shall be carried to Babylon, and there continue until the day of visitation.*

[Before Christ 598.]

**I**N the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2 Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck,

3 And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah;

4 And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters;

lived under pious Josiah, a great man, yet a good man, and the prophet's friend, stood by him, and prevailed upon the princes not to deliver him into the hands of the enraged people, whom the priests had inflamed, and were ready to murder him, as soon as they could obtain permission. *Note;* God hath in his hands the hearts of all men, and can raise us up friends in the day of trial, where we least expected to find them.

## C H A P. XXVII.

THE prophecies contained both in this chapter, and in that which follows next, belong to the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. About this time ambassadors came to Zedekiah from the kings of Edom, Moab, and other neighbouring nations, to solicit him, as it should seem, to join with them in a confederacy against the king of Babylon. On this occasion Jeremiah is ordered to put bands and yokes about his neck, and to send them afterwards to the before-mentioned kings, declaring the sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors to be of divine appointment, and promising peace and protection to such as submitted quietly, but menacing evil in case of resistance. ver. 1—11. A like admonition is delivered to Zedekiah, advising him not to expose himself and his people to certain ruin by listening to the suggestions of false prophets, and revoking from the service of the king of Babylon; ver. 12—15. The priests and all the people are also warned not to give credit to the false prophets, who taught them to expect a speedy restoration of the vessels, which had been

5 I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my out-stretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

6 And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

7 And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.

8 And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

9 Therefore, hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanter, nor to your

carried to Babylon together with Jeconiah. Instead of which it is foretold, that the remaining vessels in the house of God, and in the king's house at Jerusalem, should be carried after the other, and should not return till the appointed period of Judah's captivity was at an end; ver. 16.—to the end.

*Ver. 1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim] Of Zedekiah.* Houbigant. There can be no doubt from the 3d, 12th, and 20th verses, that our reading is an error. See particularly chap. xxviii. 1.

*Ver. 2. Make thee bonds and yokes] See ch. xxviii. 10. and the note on ch. xxv. 15.* The yoke was a pole which went over the shoulders of a man, and was fastened by bands to the neck: it was used by slaves to carry burdens, which were suspended at the extremities of the pole; so that it resembled that which is made use of by milkmen in our metropolis to carry their pails. This was an information by action, instead of words, says Bishop Warburton, foretelling the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar over Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon.

*Ver. 7. All nations shall serve him, and his son, &c.] Balthazar or Evil-Merodach being killed, this prophecy was fulfilled; for this prince was son of Nebuchodonosor the II. or the grandson of Nebuchodonosor or Nebuchadnezzar, mentioned ver. 8.*

*Until the very time] Houbigant renders the latter part as he did the beginning of ver. 14. chap. xxv.*

*Ver. 9. Therefore, hearken not, &c.] He speaks to Zedekiah and to the messengers of the other princes spoken of*

forcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon :

10 For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land ; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish.

11 But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD ; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

12 ¶ I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live.

13 Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon ?

14 Therefore, hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon : for they prophesy a lie unto you.

15 For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name ; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you.

16 ¶ Also I spake to the priests and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the LORD ; Hearken not to the words of your prophets

that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the LORD's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon : for they prophesy a lie unto you.

17 Hearken not unto them ; serve the king of Babylon, and live : wherefore should this city be laid waste.

18 But if they *be* prophets, and if the word of the LORD be with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of Hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, and *in* the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon.

19 ¶ For thus saith the LORD of Hosts, concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city,

20 Which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem ;

21 Yea, thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain *in* the house of the LORD, and *in* the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem ;

22 They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD ; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

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in ver. 3. *The diviners, dreamers, &c.* belonged to the idolatrous nations ; as the *prophets* to the Jews.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The date of this prophecy is in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim ; then probably the yokes were made in token of Judah's subjection, which soon began, though only sent to the neighbouring nations several years after, in the reign of Zedekiah, when the time of their captivity drew nearer.

1. The sign given is, the making bonds and yokes, and the putting one (probably a light, small one) on his own neck, in token of the bondage to which the people should be delivered ; and this he wore for many years, as appears from chap. xxviii. 1—10.

2. He is commanded to send one of these to all the neighbouring nations, by the hand of the messengers who came to Jerusalem to congratulate Zedekiah on his accession, or to make a league with him to oppose the growing power of the king of Babylon, and, in case of invasion, to unite their forces. A vain design ! which God had

determined to disappoint ; and therefore they are enjoined to tell their masters from God, when they delivered the prophetic symbol of their captivity, that the *Lord of Hosts*, at whose beck are the armies of heaven and earth ; the *God of Israel* ; the great Creator of all, and who, therefore, had an absolute right to dispose of all the creatures of his hand, had given these lands, with all their produce, into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, *his servant*, raised up to be his minister of wrath ; and under his dominion they must continue, and under that of his son, and his son's son, see chap. xxv. 14. till the seventy years should be completed, during which the captivity should last ; and then other mightier kings and nations should destroy this monarchy, and raise another on its ruins. Resistance to the divine decree would but aggravate their misery, and expose them to more horrid desolation, and diverse kinds of death ; nor must they give heed to their diviners and forcerers, who would flatter them with lying hopes, which would infallibly disappoint them, and, by encouraging them to resist, exasperate their conquerors more fearfully to destroy

## CHAP. XXVIII.

*Hananiah prophesieth falsely the return of the vessels, and of Jecniab. Jeremiah, wishing it to be true, sheweth that the event will declare who are true prophets. Hananiah breaketh Jeremiah's yoke. Jeremiah foretelleth of an iron yoke, and of Hananiah's death.*

[Before Christ 595.]

**A**ND it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying,

2 Thus speaketh the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.

destroy them; while those who patiently submitted and surrendered themselves should find favour in the sight of their enemies, and be suffered quietly to remain under tribute, and not be carried away captive into a strange land. *Note;* (1.) The earth is the Lord's, and he doth as pleases him with it, and none have reason to murmur against his disposal of his own. (2.) The wicked frequently enjoy the greatest share of this world's good. (3.) To struggle against God's providence is to oppose in vain; for when he judges he will overcome. (4.) Patience will alleviate the burdens which perverseness but aggravates.

2dly, Jerusalem was now tributary to the king of Babylon: but Zedekiah was meditating rebellion, and his false prophets encouraging him with hopes of success; but the consequence would be, the completion of the nation's ruin.

1. The prophet addresses the king of Judah with earnestness, beseeching him, for his own and his people's sake, patiently to submit and live, since all revolt against the king of Babylon would certainly prove fatal in the issue, and expose them to all the miseries of a siege and the massacre of a city taken by storm, notwithstanding the lies of the false prophets who flattered him and the people to their ruin, and would themselves fall under the judgment. *Note;* (1.) Rebellion against God will be attended with still more fearful consequences: how much better is it to bow our necks to the easy yoke of Christ, and live! (2.) They who embolden sinners in their evil ways shall perish with them, the deceived and the deceiver together.

2. He gives the priests and people the same warning as he had given to their king, admonishing them of the folly of hearkening to the false prophets; *your prophets* he calls them, because they chose their lying visions, and loved to have it so. They told them, that they should be successful in their revolt, and that the king of Babylon would soon be willing to purchase peace from them by the restoration of the sacred vessels which had been carried to Babylon;

3 Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon:

4 And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

5 ¶ Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah, in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD,

6 Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD's house, and

but, alas! they were only pushing them to the precipice of destruction, bringing on the utter ruin of their city, and the demolition of the temple; when, as Nebuchadnezzar had before taken the vessels of gold, 2 Kings, xxiv. 13—15. so far would he be from restoring them, that all the other vessels, with the pillars, sea, and bases of bras, should follow them into Babylon. Better, therefore, far better were it, that they should become intercessors with God to prevent the impending judgments, and preserve what was left, than flatter them with the delusive hopes of the restoration of what had been carried away. *Note;* (1.) True prophets will be advocates before God in prayer for those to whom they preach. They who maintain no communion with God can have no commission from him. (2.) The general ruin of sinners arises from false hopes, with which their lying and lazy teachers flatter them, who cry peace! when there is no peace.

3. The prophecy concludes with a gleam of hope amid the darkness of this long captivity. Though the vessels of the Lord's house, and of the houses of the kings and princes of Judah, should be thus carried to Babylon, they should not be lost, but safely laid up against the time appointed of God, when, after the seventy years were fulfilled, they should again be restored; which was marvellously accomplished by Cyrus, Ezra, i. 7. *Note;* (1.) In wrath God still remembers mercy. (2.) Though the time of the church's distress be long, we must not despair; *the vision is for an appointed time, at the end it shall speak: blessed are all they that wait for it.*

## CHAP. XXVIII.

*Ver. 1.* And it came to pass the same year] Houbigant very properly renders this, *It was the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah; in that year, in the fifth month, &c. Hananiah, &c.*—for otherwise, it is impossible to reconcile the verse to itself. See his note.

*Ver. 6.* Amen: The Lord do so] Jeremiah well knew the falsity

all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place.

7 Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people ;

8 The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence.

9 The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, *then* shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him.

10 ¶ Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it.

11 And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

12 ¶ Then the word of the LORD came

unto Jeremiah *the prophet*, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

13 Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron.

14 For thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also.

15 ¶ Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie.

16 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.

17 So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

falsity of Hananiah's prediction: he testified it by his answer: he would only shew, that if he foretold melancholy things to his country, and if he opposed the false prophets, it was not through malice or envy. "God grant that you may find this man a true prophet, and that my predictions may not be verified: may the Lord deign to turn from my country, and from the princes of my people, the miseries which I have denounced!" See Calmet.

*Ver. 8. The prophets that have been before me*] Namely, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and others. Jeremiah offers two reasons in defence of his own prophesies, and against those of Hananiah. *First*, That many other prophets agreed with him in prophesying evil against the Jews, and other neighbouring people; whereas, Hananiah being single in his predictions, nothing less than the perfect answering of the event could give him the authority of a true prophet. *Secondly*, That, considering the corruption of the people's manners, it was highly probable that God would punish their iniquities. This is one of the principles laid down by Maimonides, whereby to judge a true prophet: "He is a true prophet (says he) who is not deceived in foretelling things future:" and this principle is deduced from ver. 9. See Deut. xviii. 22. and Chandler's "Defence." Instead of *prophesied*, we may read, *have prophesied*; and instead of, *the word of the prophet*, in the next verse, *the word of that prophet*.

*Ver. 16. This year thou shalt die*] As Hananiah had limited the accomplishment of his prophecy to the space of two years, in order to gain credit with the people by so punctual a prediction; so Jeremiah confines the proof of

his veracity to a much shorter time; and the event being exactly conformable, evidently shewed the falsehood of Hananiah's pretences. Jeremiah commonly counts the months according to the ecclesiastical year. The *seventh month* answers to August and September. Compare the 17th with the first verse.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The date of this prophecy is the fourth of Zedekiah, called *the beginning* of his reign, or the former part, it continuing seven years longer; or because in this year he paid a visit to the king of Babylon, and received, as some suggest, a fresh investiture of his dominions, with considerable additions of territory, chap. li. 59.

We have here the struggle between a false and true prophet.

1. Hananiah, the son of Azur, a false prophet, in the Lord's house; in the presence of the priests and people, undertook to contradict all that Jeremiah had spoken, and, using the solemn preface of *Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel*, as if he spoke by inspiration from him; confidently asserts, both that the Babylonish yoke should be broken, the vessels of the sanctuary restored, and the captive king Jeconiah, with all the prisoners, return from Babylon to Judæa; and fixes the term, *within two full years*. *Note*; The smooth tongues of lying prophets never speak reproof, but flattery. By this ye shall know them.

2. Jeremiah heard him, and immediately replied. Warm in his country's interest, he wished nothing more ardently

C H A P. XXIX.

*Jeremiah sendeth a letter to the captives in Babylon, to be quiet there, and not to believe the dreams of their prophets, and that they shall return with grace after seventy years. He foretelleth the destruction of the rest for their disobedience: he sheweth the fearful end of Ahab and Zedekiah, two lying prophets. Shemaiah writeth a letter against Jeremiah. Jeremiah readeth his doom.*

[Before Christ 597.]

**N**OW these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people

than its prosperity, and therefore adds his *Amen, the Lord do so; the Lord perform thy words which thou hast prophesied*; as, if the Lord so pleased, he could be content to be counted a false prophet for the sake of his brethren; so unjust were all their calumnies against him, as if he desired the ruin of the nation. Though some suppose that he spoke these words ironically, fully sure, as the next words shew, of the determined destruction coming upon them; and therefore appeals to the event to prove the falsehood of Hananiah's assertion. He reminds him, before the people, how the prophets who were before their days spoke, all of whom, to a man, had denounced God's judgments against that and the neighbouring lands; such as Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Nahum; it was, therefore, rather a presumption in Jeremiah's favour, who corresponded with them herein, that he had drank at the same fountain of inspiration; whereas the prophet which prophesied of peace, as Hananiah had done, and unconditionally, without any calls to repentance, was much to be suspected that he sought to please men; and at least the event of the prediction should be waited for, ere his claim to a divine mission should be admitted.

2dly, Enraged at such a reply,

1. Hananiah seizes the yoke which Jeremiah wore in token of the subjection of the nations by Nebuchadnezzar, and, plucking it from his neck, broke it in the presence of all the people, impiously and daringly adding this explication, which he prefaces with, *Thus saith the Lord; so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years.* Note; (1.) Falsehood, advanced with solemnity and confidence, often gains regard. (2.) Many dare affirm that to be God's truth, which shortly, to their own damnation, will be found to be a lie.

2. *Jeremiah went his way*, disdainful to contend with him; or abhorring his profaneness; or withdrawing himself from the rage that he saw kindling; or patiently sitting down under these reproaches; or to wait an answer from God.

3. He is sent back with a fearful message; probably the same day, perhaps the same hour, while the people were yet assembled before the temple, and Hananiah triumph-

whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon;

2 (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem;)

3 By the hand of Elafah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,) saying,

4 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away cap-

ing, as if the day was his own; but short is the triumphing of the wicked. So far should the nations be from breaking the yoke of the king of Babylon, as Hananiah had broken the yoke of wood, that it should grow more rigorous and severe, a yoke of iron; all efforts to shake it off would be fruitless, and all the foregoing prophecies, chap. xxvii. 6., &c. be to a tittle fulfilled. Such is the nation's doom. But Hananiah has a burden peculiarly his own, the punishment of his atrocious crimes. He had pretended a commission from God, and with his name given sanction to his own lies; he had led the people with a delusive hope, to rush on their destruction; and, above all, had *taught rebellion against the Lord*, encouraging them to reject the warnings of the true prophets, and despise the divine admonitions; for which crimes he is doomed to death by the immediate judgment of God, within the course of that very year; which was within two months fulfilled; for he died in the seventh month, and this was the fifth: and in his doom the people might have read the certainty of their own, and the truth of all that Jeremiah had spoken; but their foolish hearts were darkened. Note; (1.) God will not suffer his prophets to be insulted with impunity. (2.) None may expect a heavier judgment than they who are hinderers of the word of God, and who seek to prejudice men's minds against the faithful ministers of it. (3.) That sudden death is terrible indeed, which comes from God in a way of judgment.

C H A P. XXIX.

*Ver. 1. Now these are the words*] Neither the year nor the cause of this deputation are precisely known; but it is thought to have been at the beginning of Zedekiah's reign. By the *residue of elders* some understand the remnant of the members of the sanhedrin, carried away captive in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, many of whom died of the hardships which they suffered in their transportation. Houbigant however, not content with this interpretation, renders it, *unto the principal elders.* By the *prophets*, the Chaldee understands the scribes or doctors of the law; while others think that Ezekiel, Daniel, and other prophets of the captivity, may be meant.

*Ver. 5—7.*

tives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;

5 Build ye houses, and dwell *in them*; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

8 ¶ For thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that *be* in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

9 For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD.

10 ¶ For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

13 And ye shall seek me, and find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

14 And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity,

and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

15 ¶ Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon;

16 *Know* that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, *and* of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity;

17 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

18 And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:

19 Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.

20 ¶ Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon:

21 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes;

*Ver. 5—7. Build ye houses, and dwell in them*] The prophet gives them this advice to check their hopes of a speedy return from Babylon, with which they had been flattered by the false prophets; and the advice is remarkable; teaching us in what manner we ought to live among foreign powers, and how we ought to consider those whom Providence has placed over us. See Baruch, i. 11, 12. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

*Ver. 12. Ye shall go and pray unto me*] *Ye shall pray unto me more and more.*

*Ver. 14. I will gather you from all the nations, &c.*] Though this prophecy has its primary completion in the restoration of the Jews under Cyrus; yet, like many others of the same kind, it can have its full completion only in that general restoration of the Jews so frequently spoken of.

*Ver. 21. Ahab—and—Zedekiah*] Two false prophets, who seduced the Jews at Babylon. The rabbies, followed by many interpreters, believe that these were the two persons who attempted to seduce Susanna. See ver. 23.

*Ver. 22.*

22 And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire :

23 Because they have committed villainy in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them ; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD.

24 ¶ Thus shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying,

25 Thus speaketh the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of

Maasciah the priest, and to all the priests, saying,

26 The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks.

27 Now therefore why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you ?

28 For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long : build ye houses, and dwell in them ; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

29 And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet.

*Ver. 22. Roasted in the fire*] This horrid punishment was frequent in the East, especially among the Chaldeans, as appears from Daniel, iii. 6. and Amos, ii. 1. and was often practised in the persecution of the Christians in Dioclesian's time. Under Antiochus Epiphanes, the seven brethren were tried by this torture. See 2 Macc. vii.

*Ver. 26. The Lord hath made thee priest*] Shemaiah directs the words of his letter to Zephaniah, as being *¶* *segan*, or next in order to the high priest; and tells him that God had appointed him to supply the place of the high priest, who was probably absent at that time. His name was either Azariah or Seraiah his son, but called *Jehoiada* from the remarkable zeal and courage of that pontiff. The Roman law condemned those to be scourged who pretended to be prophets, and boasted of inspiration, *Quis se Deo plenus simularent*; upon which principle they frequently scourged and punished the first Christians. See Calmet and Paulin. lib. v. tit. xxi. De Vaticinio.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here the letter of Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon, written by divine authority. It is directed to the prophets, priests, and people carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar, after Jeconiah had surrendered himself, whose case seemed most peculiarly miserable; and perhaps they envied their brethren who were left; though their own lot, if they knew how to improve it, was far more desirable. The letter was sent by Zedekiah's messengers, who went with the tribute, or to cultivate the friendship of the king of Babylon; and the contents of it were designed to encourage their hopes in God; to comfort them under their afflictions; to exhort them patiently to wait God's appointed time, and to prevent their being deluded by false prophets to expect a deliverance sooner than the expiration of the seventy years.

1. He addresses them in God's name, and by his authority, *Thou saith the Lord of Hosts*, able to save to the uttermost, and *the God of Israel*, who still acknowledged his

relation to them, and had not cast them from his regard, though he had cast them out of their land: thus, though perplexed, they must not be in despair. *I have carried you to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon*, God's hand was in it; without which no human power could have prevailed against them. *Note*, The consideration from whose hand all our sufferings come, should silence every murmuring thought.

2. He encourages them to sit down content in their present state, to wait patiently God's time of deliverance; and in the meanwhile settle themselves as comfortably as might be; to build, and plant, and marry, that they might not be diminished either in wealth or numbers, when they should return again unto their own land; and intimates, that God would give them a peaceable abode, and comfortable enjoyment of their possessions, even in the land of their captivity. *Note*, Wherever we are cast by God's providence, or into whatever state of affliction, it is our wisdom not only to submit, but make the best of our situation, and live in hopes of better days.

3. He exhorts them to be peaceable under the government of the king of Babylon, though a heathen, and an enemy to God; to shew all good fidelity; and, so far from plotting against the state in order to recover their liberty, to seek the prosperity of the country in which they were captives, and pray to God to preserve and increase it, for *in the peace thereof should they have peace*. It was their interest to do so; seeing that in every calamity of that land they would be involved, and in the prosperity of it find their advantage. *Note*, If we must submit to the power of oppressors, and pray for the peace of the land of our captivity, how much more are we bound to be loyal subjects under the mildest government, and in this our land of liberty to seek and pray for the peace thereof!

2dly, To engage them to patient waiting upon God,

1. He warns them to pay no regard to the false prophets, who promised them a speedy return to their own land,

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30 ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

31 Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie:

32 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebelliousness against the LORD.

land, and thereby discouraged them from settling in Babylon. Their dreams were the fancies of their own imagination, and never to be encouraged or listened to; since, though they used the name of God, they lied, and never had a revelation from him. *Note*: When people love to be deceived, they will readily find flatterers to their ruin.

2. He assures them, that, though their prophets were false, God's promises would be found true, and accomplished in due season. When the seventy years were ended, his purposes concerning them were all gracious, yea, even their captivity was designed for their good, chap. xxiv. 5. and the *expected end* should assuredly come; only let them with patience wait for it, and in earnest prayer and supplication seek the fulfilment of the divine promises; *searching after God with all their heart*, in fervency and simplicity, and then he will assuredly be found of them in mercy, and turn their captivity into a blessed restoration unto their own land. *Note*: (1.) They who trust in the promises of God shall never be disappointed. (2.) God's promises should excite, not supersede, our prayers. (3.) They who search for God with all their heart are sure to find him near to hear and answer them.

3dly, Though there were some gracious souls among the captives, yet were there many who paid no regard to the words of Jeremiah, but hearkened to the false prophets, and received them as sent from God; and boasted that they needed not look to Judæa for advice, when they had prophets of their own in Babylon, on whom they might depend. To these therefore the prophet addresses himself.

1. He warns them of the falsehood of the declarations of their prophets. They flattered the people with a speedy return to Judæa; whereas, so far from it, the residue of those who were left in Jerusalem were doomed to the most grievous devastations by famine, pestilence, and the sword; and the few who survived should be scattered into all kingdoms, and made the objects of derision, scorn, and detestation in every place, like vile figs unfit to be eaten, and cast as refuse on the dunghill; and this because of their impenitence and rejection of the repeated and earnest warnings which God, by his prophets, had vouchsafed them, as had been threatened before, chap. xxiv. *Note*: (1.) They who flatter sinners with hopes contrary to God's word, are infallibly false prophets. (2.) When men make themselves vile by their sins, God, in just judgment, will make them vile in their sufferings.

2. He denounces judgment on two of the false prophets, Ahab and Zedekiah; whose abominable lives, as well as atrocious lies, called for vengeance. They were horrible

adulterers, and yet dared to take God's name in their lips, and pretend that he had sent them, when they knew that he never commanded them, and, under the cloak of profound hypocrisy, practised every villainy. But, though men might not discover their wickedness, God saw, and will recompense them according to their deeds. *Detected*, probably, in some seditious practices, the king of Babylon would seize them, and burn them alive before the eyes of the people for a terror to others: a catastrophe so dreadful, that when any would wish the heaviest curse on their enemies, they should not be able to conceive a worse imprecation, than *the Lord make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire*. *Note*: (1.) They who live in the practice of lewdness and adultery, and the like villainy themselves, must needs belie their pretensions to a mission from God, and will have no boldness to rebuke the like practices in others. (2.) Secretly as men's sins may be committed, the day is near when no darkness or shadow of death shall hide the workers of iniquity. (3.) Though wicked prophets and wicked men may escape the judgments of God in this life, there is a fire kindled for them where they must burn eternally, and none shall quench it.

4thly, Whatever effect Jeremiah's letter had upon the people, we are not to wonder if the false prophets, whose sins he so faithfully rebuked, were exasperated. We have,

1. The endeavours used by one of them to get Jeremiah severely punished. His name is *Shemaiah the Nehelamite, or the dreamer*; one of those lying prophets who deceived the people, and who, in revenge for the reproofs contained in Jeremiah's letter, by the return of the messengers probably who had brought it, he writes in his own name, without consulting his brethren, to the people in general, and to Zephaniah in particular, who seems to have been in some chief station in the temple, well knowing that the church rulers bore no good will to the reforming prophets. He suggests to him the necessity of exerting the authority with which he was invested: *The Lord hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest*. Either he would insinuate, that he was, in zeal for God's glory, such another; or rather Jehoiada might be another name of Seraiah the high-priest, whose sagan or deputy he might be, or in some other chief office in the temple, see chap. lii. 24. He therefore, with the priests his brethren, should take cognizance of every enthusiastic fellow, *that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet*. Such ill names do God's faithful ministers often bear, and to such insolent reproaches are they exposed, as if intruders into the sacred service, disturbed in mind, or under diabolical possession: *That thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks; both to expose and punish*

C H A P. XXX.

*God sheweth Jeremiah the return of the Jews. After their trouble they shall have deliverance: he comforteth Jacob. Their return shall be gracious. Wrath shall fall on the wicked.*

[Before Christ 606.]

**T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD; saying,

punish such delinquents, of which number he affirms Jeremiah to be, and blames Zephaniah for not proceeding against him as a false prophet; the proof of which he supposes would be no longer doubted, when he repeated but one line of Jeremiah's letter, that *this captivity is long*, and that, instead of hoping for a speedy restoration, the captives should settle themselves peaceably in Babylon. *Note;* (1.) They who will be faithful to men's souls, must expect often to be treated as deceivers or madmen. (2.) Church power has been often employed in tormenting her best friends. (3.) The accusations generally brought against the ministers of zeal are by their adversaries looked upon as carrying evidence incontestable of their enthusiasm and delusion; yet when their words and preaching are calmly considered and examined, they contain nothing but the true sayings of God.

2. Shemaiah's doom is read. *Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah;* either privately, out of kindness, to warn him of his enemies (for when known they are more easily guarded against); or, to acquaint him with the charge, before he proceeded to judgment upon the case. And God gives Jeremiah an answer, which he is commanded to send to all those of the captivity, that they might be warned against the impostor, and mark his punishment for daring to pretend a divine mission, and teaching rebellion against the Lord, by dissuading the people from paying regard to his prophets. Shemaiah shall not only perish himself, but his family be utterly cut off, his name be buried in oblivion, and none of his race ever see or taste of the goodness that God hath still in store for his people. *Note;* None perish under such aggravated guilt as those false teachers, at whose hands God will require the souls which they have deceived and flattered to their ruin.

C H A P. XXX.

**T**HERE are many prophecies in various parts of the Old Testament, which announce the future restoration of Israel to their own land, and the complete re-establishment of both their civil and religious constitution in the latter days, meaning the times of the Gospel dispensation. These two chapters contain a prophecy of this kind, which must necessarily be referred to those times, because it points out circumstances which certainly were not fulfilled at the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, nor have hitherto had their completion. For the people who returned from Babylon were chiefly, if not entirely, the people of Judah and Benjamin only, who had been carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar; but here it is foretold, that not the captivity of Judah only should be restored,

2 Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.

3 For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

but the captivity of Israel also, meaning those ten tribes that were carried away before by Shalmaneser king of Assyria, and who still remain in their several dispersions, having never returned, in a national capacity at least, to their own land, whatever some few individuals have done. But the terms of the prophecy entitle us to expect, not an obscure and partial, but a complete and universal restoration, when God will manifest himself, as formerly, the God and patron of all the families of Israel, and not of a few only. Again, it is promised, that after this restoration they should no more fall under the dominion of foreigners, but be governed by princes and magistrates of their own nation, independent of any but God and David their king. But this was not the case with the Jews who returned from Babylon. They then indeed had a leader, Zerubbabel, one of their own nation, and also of the family of David. But both the nation and their leader continued still in a state of vassalage and the most servile dependence upon the Persian monarchy. And when the Grecian monarchy succeeded, they changed their masters only, not their condition; till at length, under the Asmonæan princes, they had for a while an independent government of their own, but without any title to the name of David. At last they fell under the Roman yoke, since which time their situation has been such, as not to afford the least ground to pretend, that the promised restoration has yet taken place. It remains therefore to be brought about in future under the reign of the Messiah, emphatically distinguished by the name of David; when every particular circumstance predicted concerning it will, no doubt, be verified by a distinct and unequivocal accomplishment.

There is no particular date annexed to this prophecy, whereby to ascertain the precise time of its delivery. But it may not unreasonably be presumed to have followed immediately after the preceding one, in which the restoration of the people from their Babylonish captivity is in direct terms foretold. Hence the transition is natural and easy to the more glorious and general restoration, which was to take place in a more distant period, and was designed for the ultimate object of the national hopes and expectations. Both events are frequently thus connected together in the prophetic writings, and perhaps with this design, that when that which was nearest at hand should be accomplished, it might afford the strongest and most satisfactory kind of evidence, that the latter, how remote soever its period, would in like manner be brought about by the interposition of Jehovah in its due season.

But though this prophecy relates wholly to one single subject, it seems naturally to divide itself into three distinct

Q<sup>2</sup>

parts.

4 ¶ And these *are* the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah.

5 For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.

6 Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a

woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?

7 Alas! for that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it; it *is* even the time of Jacob's trouble: but he shall be saved out of it.

8 For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of Hosts, *that* I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy

parts. The first part, after a short preface, in which the prophet is required to commit to writing the matters revealed to him, commences with representing, in a style of awe and energy, the consternation and distress which in some future day of visitation should fall upon all nations, preparatory to the scene of Jacob's deliverance, ver. 5—9. Israel is encouraged to confide in the divine assurances of restoration and protection, ver. 10, 11. He is prepared previously to expect a severe chastisement for the multitude of his sins, but consoled with the prospect of a happy termination, ver. 12—17. This is followed by an enumeration at large of the blessings and privileges to which the Jews should be restored upon their re-admission into God's favour, ver. 18—22. Again however it is declared, that the anger of JEHOVAH would not subside, till his purposed vengeance against the wicked should have been fully executed, and then, but not till then, an entire reconciliation would take place between him and all the families of Israel, ver. 23.—Ch. xxxi. 1.

The second part of this prophecy begins chap. xxxi. 2. and is marked by a sudden transition to a distant period of time, represented in a vision, and embellished with a variety of beautiful scenes and images. God announces the renewal of his ancient love for Israel, and promises them in consequence thereof a speedy restoration of their former privileges and happiness, ver. 2—5. Already the heralds have proclaimed on mount Ephraim the arrival of the joyful day; they summon the people to re-assemble once more in Zion; and promulge by special command the glad tidings of salvation which God has accomplished for them. God himself declares his readiness to conduct home the remnant of Israel from all parts of their dispersion, to compassionate and relieve their infirmities, and to provide them with all necessary accommodations by the way, ver. 6—9. The news is carried into distant lands, and the nations are summoned to attend to the display of God's power and goodness, in rescuing his people from their stronger enemies, and in supplying them after their return with all manner of good things, to the full extent of their wants and desires, ver. 10—14.

Here the scene changes, and two new personages are successively introduced, in order to diversify the same subject, and to impress it more strongly. Rachel first; who is represented as just risen from her grave, and bitterly bewailing the loss of her children, for whom she looks about her in vain, for none are to be seen. Her tears are dried up, and she is consoled with the assurance that they are not lost for ever, but shall in time be brought back to their ancient borders, ver. 15—17.

Ephraim comes next. He laments his past undutiful-

ness with great contrition and penitence, and professes an earnest desire of amendment. These symptoms of returning duty are no sooner discerned in him, than God acknowledges him once more as a darling child, and resolves with mercy to receive him, ver. 18—25.

The virgin of Israel is then earnestly exhorted to hasten the preparations for her return, and encouraged with the prospect of having a signal miracle wrought in her favour, ver. 21, 22. And the vision closes at last with a promise, that the divine blessing should again rest upon the land of Judah, and that the men of Judah should once more dwell there, cultivating it according to the simplicity of ancient institutions, and fully discharged from every want, ver. 23—26.

In the third part, by way of appendix to the Vision, the following gracious promises are specifically annexed: That God would in time to come supply all the deficiencies of Israel and Judah; and would be as diligent to restore, as he had ever been to destroy them; and would not any more visit the offences of the fathers upon the children, ver. 27—30. That he would make with them a better covenant than he had made with their forefathers, ver. 31—34. That they should continue a nation by an ordinance as firm and lasting as that of the heavens, that *is* to say, they should never be dispersed again, ver. 35—37; and that Jerusalem should again be built, enlarged in its extent, and secure from future desolation, ver. 38—40.

*Ver. 2. Write thee all the words, &c.]* See ch. xxxvi. 1, 2.

*Ver. 3. For, lo, the days come]* Though the prophecy in this chapter contains many circumstances which refer to the return of the Jews from Babylon, yet there are many others, which so suit the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of his church, particularly in the last days, that there is no giving them literally any other sense; and even the clearest and most express prophecies for the deliverance from Babylon, are very naturally to be explained of Jesus Christ and his faithful followers, and the final return of the Jews.

*Ver. 6. Ask ye now, &c.]* "Is it usual for men to be with child, and to suffer the pangs of travail? Whence then do I see you, Chaldeans and Babylonians, in a similar posture?" The prophet uses this figure, to represent the fear of the Babylonians, and their extreme surprise, when the forces of the Medes and Persians should come upon them. The next verse refers to the same. But though it was a time of trouble to the Babylonians, and to the Jews, as connected with them; yet were the latter saved out of it. Cyrus, in the first year of his reign over Babylon, gave them liberty to return to their own country.

*Ver. 8.*

bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him :

9 But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

10 ¶ Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and quiet, and none shall make him afraid.

11 For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

12 For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous.

13 There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines.

14 All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased.

15 Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee.

16 Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they

*Ver. 8. And strangers, &c.] And they shall no more serve him among strangers.* This prophecy has not yet received its full accomplishment; for, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, they were again reduced to servitude by the Greeks and Romans; and at present there is no place in the world where they can be said to enjoy perfect liberty. See Lowth and Calmet.

*Ver. 9. They shall serve the Lord—and David]* In this place, in Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24. and in Hosea, iii. 5. David signifies the Messiah. The Targum uses the word *Messiah* in this very passage, instead of *David*; and the Talmud, *Sanbed. xi. sect. 36.* proves from Ezekiel that David is the name of the Messiah; which Kimchi likewise asserts. The prophets above cited lived long after David; and yet they prophesy of a future king, who is indeed the Messiah in the judgment of all the Jews of note, but called by the name of David, because represented in and by David: for the name of *David* was not communicated to the Messiah as being the son of David, for then Solomon, or some other of David's race, would have been called by his name also; but, none of his children being called so, except the Messiah, it may be concluded that the name was not appropriated to him, in respect of his descent from David, but for being typified in David; and so, as is usual, to make the resemblance more plain between the type and the antitype, the Messiah is described under the name of the person representing him; as David is on the other hand termed the *Son of God*, the *first-born*, from bearing the person of the Messiah, who was truly called so. When the Messiah, therefore, is called *David*, and *the son of Jesse*, it is because he was typified in David: when he is spoken of as the *son of David*, or under the name and description of Solomon, it is upon the presumption that Christ was signified in the son of David, so solemnly promised to him by Nathan. We may likewise observe, that persons resembling others in qualities, office, or actions, are described in the prophets by the name of those whom they resemble.

The Messiah is promised to come, by the name of *David*; and yet no Jew ever expected that David should return to the earth bodily, or the Messiah be the person of David. Zadok the high-priest and his sons in David's time, 1 Chron. vi. 31. 49. are recorded by the name of *Aaron and his sons*, because they succeeded in Aaron's office, and performed the functions of the high-priesthood. Nay, Elijah himself is called *Phinehas* by the Jews, because they both resembled each other in their zeal. See Bishop Chandler's Defence. We cannot have a stronger instance of the fallacy of the human judgment, than that a man of Grotius's learning and discernment should sit down to shew that *Zerubbabel* is meant by *David* in this place.

*Ver. 12. Thy bruise is incurable]* That is, "By all human means, and therefore I will work the greater miracle, and restore health to thee:" ver. 17. Houbigant renders it, *Thy bruise is deadly*; and so in the 15th verse.

*Ver. 15. Why criest thou?]* Why criest thou over thy affliction, thy incurable sorrow? it is for the greatness of thy iniquity, and because thy sins were increased, that I have done these things unto thee: ver. 16. yet surely all they, &c. "The Chaldeans, Assyrians, Egyptians, Edomites, and others, who have afflicted, oppressed, and persecuted you, shall be devoured and extirpated, while you shall be re-established." The Assyrians, who opposed Israel and Judah, were so destroyed by the Babylonians and Medes, that mention is no more made of their empire. The monarchy of the Chaldeans was overthrown by the Persians, and never recovered itself. The empire of the Egyptians and Persians was destroyed by Alexander. But the Jewish people, who appeared as it were extinct, and annihilated in their dispersion, re-appeared on a sudden, and sprung again as it were from their own ashes, to become as numerous and as powerful as ever. The prophets frequently denounce against these nations the menaces which we read here. See chap. xxv. 14. Isai. xiv. 2. xlix. 19. Zeph. ii. and Calmet.

*Ver. 18.*

that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey.

17 For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

18 ¶ Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof.

19 And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

20 Their children also shall be as afore-

time, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.

21 And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD.

22 And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

23 ¶ Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked.

24 The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.

*Ver. 18. And have mercy on his dwelling-places] On his tabernacles; which corresponds to the former clause. The expressions allude to the ancient manner of dwelling in tents; and though they may be understood metaphorically, yet were they in some measure fulfilled under Zerubbabel. See Houbigant.*

*Ver. 21. And their nobles shall be of themselves] And their prince or mighty one shall be for themselves. Houbigant. The Messiah seems plainly marked out by the two names of Mighty One and Governor in this verse, and so the Targum understands it. I will cause him to draw near, &c. says the Lord; that is to say, "He shall have a near attendance upon me, for I will make him a priest as well as a king;" according to that prophecy in Ps. cx. For who is this that engaged his heart, &c.? "Who is there so entirely devoted to my service as the Messiah?" The words מי הוא זה, *mi hu zeh*,—who is this, have an emphasis in the original, which cannot be expressed in another language, and are spoken by way of admiration. Houbigant renders the clause, For who will have confidence in his heart to approach unto me? Cyrus in his edict seems to have had this place in view. See Ezra, i. 3.*

*Ver. 24. In the latter days ye shall consider it] Ye shall consider and understand it. This and the preceding verse are found in chap. xxiii. 19, 20. The latter days may signify the time to come; but they commonly imply the times under the gospel, as being the last dispensation, and what should continue to the end of the world. In this sense the words import, "When all these evils are come upon you, which God hath threatened for your disobedience, and particularly for your heinous crime in rejecting the Messiah, and you have found the denunciations verified in the several captivities that you have undergone, then you will understand the import of this and several other prophecies, and the event will perfectly instruct you in their meaning." See Lowth and Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, To perpetuate the memory of the great and gracious promises, God commands the prophet to write in a book *all the words* that he had spoken to him; either all the preceding prophecies, or those which he had now spoken to him, relative to the enlargement of the Jews from their captivity, and the coming of the Messiah; and this to support the faith and hope of the people of God, both of Israel and Judah.

1. They are represented as under the greatest terror and distress. It was a strange sight, but descriptive of the acuteness of their pains, to behold the men of war, like women in travail, with their hands on their loins, trembling, pallid, and crying out in their pangs, *Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it, so terrible and afflictive; and this may refer to the destruction of the Jews by the Chaldeans, or to their more terrible desolations by the Romans: and some suppose, that it has a farther respect even to the reign of Antichrist, when the witnesses should be slain, and the church of Christ reduced to great distress.*

2. The prophet must write a word of comfort for that gloomy and dark day. Though it is *the time of Jacob's trouble, he shall be saved out of it; God will stand by his suffering people, and rescue them from the hands of their enemies. He will break their yoke, deliver them from the Babylonish chains, or rather from their present state of bondage, when strangers in all nations whither they are dispersed shall no more serve themselves of them, oppress and harass them no more; or, best of all, from the bondage of sin and Satan, their unbelief and impenitence, when they shall be turned unto the Lord, and serve the Lord their God, and David their king; which has certainly a farther view than to the restoration of the temple-service, and to the governors who presided over them after the captivity in Babylon—even to the adored Messiah, David's son, raised up to sit on his throne; and David's Lord, whose divine character they should acknowledge, submit to his govern-*  
ment,

## C H A P. XXXI.

*The restoration of Israel. The publication thereof. Rachel mourning is comforted. Ephraim repenting, is brought home again. Christ is promised: his care over the church: his new covenant. The stability and amplitude of the church.*

[Before Christ 606.]

**A**T the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

ment, and join with his church in his worship; *whom I will raise up unto them*; God, according to his promises, having constituted him to be a prince and saviour, to whom every knee must bow, and whom every tongue must confess. *Note*; They who take Christ for their king are bound to prove their professions by their fidelity. Loyalty consists not in words but deeds.

2dly, When God visits his people, he still in wrath remembers mercy.

1. Their state appears very deplorable; yea, to human view, utterly desperate; their *bruise incurable*, their *wound grievous*, so that all restoration was despaired of; God himself seemed to be their enemy, their *cruel enemy*. So severe, so long continued were the strokes of his judgments upon them; they had not a friend in their troubles to *plead* for them, either with God or man; or so much as a kind hand stretched out to bind up their gaping wounds, or administer the *healing medicine* of consolation or advice. Their lovers, the neighbouring nations who courted them in their prosperity, deserted them in the day of their distress, and looked upon their case as desperate, regarding Zion as *an outcast, whom no man seeketh after*, abandoned to destruction; all which extorted from them bitter complaints; not that they had any cause to charge God as severe; for, because of the multitude of their iniquities and their aggravated sins, had these visitations been sent upon them, and their sufferings were less than they deserved; for, heavy as the visitation seemed to them, God *corrected them in measure*, and for their good, that he might *not leave them altogether unpunished*; as a father chastising them, that they might be reformed, and not ruined. *Note*; (1.) In our sufferings we are too apt to call the rod of a father *the chastisement of a cruel one*. (2.) Sin has a mortal sting; and none but God can heal the guilty soul. (3.) Whatever burden God lays upon us, we are bound to acknowledge it less than our iniquity has deserved. (4.) When the sinner is reduced to the depths of self-despair, then is the time when God magnifies the riches of his grace in his salvation.

2. The Lord declares his purpose of mercy towards them. Desperate as their case seemed, both from their sins and sufferings, God bids them not *fear*, nor *be dismayed*; he owns them still as his servants, and engages to save them, if they will return to him. Though far dispersed in distant lands, he will bring them back, and give them, for all the wars and tumults with which they had been harassed, peace and quiet in their own land; which seems more applicable to their last recovery, when they shall be gathered into the gospel church, than to their

2 Thus saith the LORD, The people *which were left of the sword* found grace in the wilderness; *even* Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.

3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.

4 Again I will build thee, and thou shalt

return from Babylon, when their settlement met with many obstructions. As for their enemies, God threatens to destroy them utterly; but adds, *Though I will make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee*: the mightiest monarchies have been long since utterly subverted, and all other nations, among whom they had been captives, *devoured*, destroyed, and incorporated with their conquerors; but to this hour we see the people of the Jews as much a distinct and separate people, as if they had been still shut up from all other nations in their own land, preserved for the promised mercy: *and*, notwithstanding all their sins and dire calamities, God promises, in a national view, to pardon the one and heal the other; to *restore their health*, and *heal their wounds*; bringing them into a state of temporal prosperity, and saving those who will accept of the offers of his gospel from the power of corruption; converting their souls, and causing them to partake of all the blessings of his spiritual kingdom in Christ Jesus. *Note*; (1.) No sinner's case is so far gone, as to be past the divine physician's ability to cure. (2.) They who believe God's promises, will be delivered from distressing fears. (3.) The present state of the Jewish people is a great and constant evidence of the inspiration of the prophetic word.

3dly, The same subject is pursued, and the promises delivered have a twofold respect:

1. To the return of the Jews from Babylon. Then their city should be rebuilt on the same spot, the temple raised from its ashes, the sacred festivals be restored, their numbers be multiplied, their nation be respected, their children be playing in the streets in peace, their congregation at the temple undisturbed, their oppressors punished; their rulers, of themselves, not strangers; their governor one of their own nation, appointed of God, accepted of him, a pattern of devotion and piety to his subjects. The covenant of national peculiarity shall be re-established, God again the God of Judah, and they his peculiar people as a nation; whilst all the wicked, who had persecuted them, shall be swept away as with a whirlwind, through *his fierce anger of the Lord*, which *shall not return until he have done it*, fully established his people in their own land, and destroyed their foes.

2. To their return to the church of God from their present dispersion; and this seems chiefly intended.

[1.] They shall be recovered from their captivity. Some suppose, literally, that they shall be collected in Judea (which is my own opinion), and that the city of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt in all its former magnificence; however, they



be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.

5 Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat *them* as common things.

6 For there shall be a day, *that* the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise

ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.

7 For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.

8 Behold, I will bring them from the north

they shall come into the church of Christ, the city of the living God, the spiritual Jerusalem, and the voice of thanksgiving for gospel-grace shall sound louder than the songs which accompanied the sacred festivals.

[2.] Their numbers will be great in the day of their conversion, and a most glorious appearance will they make, when they shall be rapidly brought to the faith of the Gospel, and a nation be born in a day. At that day the children of the church shall be multiplied in a more astonishing manner than at the first preaching of the Gospel, and no more persecuting powers remain to disturb the congregation of the saints.

[3.] They will then be brought to know and acknowledge the true Messiah. His noble one, his glorious, or mighty one, as the word may be rendered, *shall be of themselves; and their governor, the Prince of Peace, able to save and to destroy, shall proceed from the midst of them, rise up from the stock of Israel; I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me* as Mediator between God and man, appointed to be the friend and advocate of his faithful people, and ever living in heaven to make intercession for them, in consequence of his having *engaged his heart to God; to draw near to him by an obedience to death, even the death of the cross.* And this may well deserve a note of admiration, *Who is this!* This is Jesus, by whom lost souls are restored to the favour of the justly-offended Jehovah, and he becomes *their God, and they his people,* which will be the case with the Jews at the latter day.

[4.] All the wicked will be cut off; they who will not submit to the Messiah's government, must perish under his wrath terrible and irresistible, which sinners will be made to feel, if not before, at least at the great day of his appearing and glory; and then it will be too late to consider, when wrath comes upon them to the uttermost: or, *in the latter days ye shall consider it,* shall see this prophecy accomplished, all the purposes of God's love to his faithful people, and of wrath to his enemies, fully performed.

#### C H A P. XXXI.

*Ver. 1. At the same time*] This is a continuation of the discourse which was begun in the last chapter. "This second part (says Calmet) principally respects the turn of the ten tribes. I have shewn in a particular dissertation, that not only Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, but all the twelve tribes, returned into their own country." Nothing is more expressly marked out in the prophets than this event; Jeremiah here foretels it in the clearest manner. But many great men have considered the return of the ten tribes here referred to, as an event which is to take place in the latter days of the Gospel.

*Ver. 2. The people which were left, &c.]* The first-fruits of salvation among the Jews are here specified, and that *wilderness* is meant, in which the Author of grace and his forerunner made their first appearance. The Jews were then a people *left to the sword*, namely, of the Chaldeans and Romans. Then the first Jews found a way *to their rest*, and guarded it for their posterity, to whom they left the example of their faith. *The people left of the sword, and all the families of Israel,* are different; as the beginning of salvation was with a few Jews, so the general salvation will take place in the whole nation. The prophet touches upon the first-fruits as a prelude to that complete and general salvation which will take place on the restoration of the Jews. Houbigant. Instead of, *Even Israel, &c.* Schultens reads, *As Israel was marching to his glory.*

*Ver. 3. The Lord hath appeared of old unto me]* From afar off Jehovah appeared unto me. These words, it is certain, were not spoken in reference to the same time that those were which go before. They may well be included in a parenthesis, and seem designed to intimate, that the prophet was favoured with a visionary prospect of a remote period to come, in which God is represented as discoursing of the transactions belonging to that period, as if they were already at hand; and this accounts for the use of verbs in the past tense, both in the preceding verse, and in ver. 6, 7. It is manifest from ver. 26. that the prophet had been in a vision or trance, out of which he awaked. And it is no less evident, that the general restoration of Israel, the subject of the discourse which he had heard during his vision, so much to his satisfaction, is not yet accomplished, nor entered upon, nor is there any certainty when it exactly will be.

*Ver. 4. Again I will build thee]* "Thy inhabitants shall be again restored, who shall rebuild their cities and habitations which lay desolate during the time of their captivity: thou shalt again hear rejoicing in thy land as before," &c. The Jews are called the *virgin of Israel*, to imply that, they returning in repentance and faith, the stains of their former idolatries, so often compared to whoredoms, have been taken away through the merit of their great Deliverer, the Messiah. See Lowth and Calmet.

*Ver. 6. The watchmen—cry]* Though the first reference may be to the leaders and teachers of the Jews returning from Babylon; yet, in the full completion of the prophecy, by *watchmen* the preachers of the Messiah, or of the Gospel, are to be understood; for the Jews apply the Hebrew word *נצרים* *notsrim*, expressly to this purpose. The phrase, *Arise ye,* alludes to the Jewish custom of going to Jerusalem at their three annual festivals.

*Ver. 7. Among the chief of the nations]* On the tops of the mountains.



country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, *and* with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.

9 They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim *is* my first-born.

10 Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare *it* in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd *doth* his flock.

11 For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of *him that was* stronger than he.

12 Therefore, they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.

13 Then shall the virgin rejoice in the

dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

14 And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.

15 ¶ Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, *and* bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they *were* not.

16 Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

17 And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.

18 ¶ I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself *thus*; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou *art* the LORD my God.

19 Surely after that I was turned, I re-

mountains. Houbigant. See Pf. lxxii. 16. Mic. iv. 1. We may read the whole clause, *For thus hath* JEHOVAH *said, Shout forth joy unto Jacob; and congratulate with the chief of the nations; publish ye, praise ye, and say, JEHOVAH hath saved thy people, the remnant of Israel.*

Ver. 8, 9. *Behold, &c.*] The reader will understand these verses best by referring to Isai. xxxv. 5, &c. xli. 18. xlix. 10. where that prophet foretels the same things, though with much more magnificence. All this was but imperfectly verified in the return of the Jews from Babylon, but was made good in those who were made partakers of the Gospel of Christ, in the miracles, in the preaching of the apostles, in the free grace and pardoning mercy of the Redeemer; but will be still more fully accomplished, when the Jews shall be restored, and the fulness of the Gentiles arrive. Houbigant renders the beginning of the 9th verse, *They went out with weeping; I will restore them with comfort.*

Ver. 14. *I will satiate, &c.*] See Pf. xxxvi. 8. lxiii. 5. Isai. lv. 2.

Ver. 15. *A voice was heard in Ramah*] The prophet describes the lamentations in and about Jerusalem at the time of the several captivities, under the image of a mother lamenting over her dead children. The mournful scene is laid in Ramah, in the tribe of Benjamin mentioned Josh. xviii. 25. and Rachel, the mother of that tribe, is introduced as chief mourner on so sad an occasion. This figurative representation was in a great measure literally fulfilled when Herod slew the infants at Bethle-

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hem, the place where Rachel was buried; and, therefore, she may with great propriety be represented as rising from the grave, and lamenting the death of her innocent children. It is observable, that the Vulgate, Chaldee, and LXX. understand the word רמה *Ramah*, not as a proper name, but as an appellative; and translate it *on high, or aloud*; according to which the sense will be, *A voice is heard on high, or aloud, lamentations, weepings louder and louder; Rachel weeping over her children, refusing to be comforted over her children, because they are not.* The prophecy might primarily have alluded to the afflictions in which the Jews were immersed when collected by Nebuzaradan at Ramah, in order to be transported into Babylon: but when considered in its secondary sense, as alluding to the massacre made by Herod at Bethlehem, we may infer, that had the prophet lived at that time, and heard the mothers' shrieks increasing, as the murderers proceeded in their havoc, he could not have given a more lively description of that massacre. See Grotius.

Ver. 16. *For thy work shall be rewarded*] The Scriptures frequently allude to the years or days of a hireling: see Job, vii. 1, 2. xiv. 6. Isai. xvi. 4. xl. 10. lxii. 11.

Ver. 17. *And there is hope in thine end*] "Though these of the present age do not live to see a return from the captivity, yet their posterity shall enjoy that blessing." This was particularly fulfilled with respect to the tribe of Benjamin in their return under Cyrus.

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Ver.

pented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon *my* thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

20 *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child?* for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.

21 Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, *even the way which* thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.

22 ¶ How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

23 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice and mountain of holiness.

24 And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they *that* go forth with flocks.

25 For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.

26 Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

27 ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast.

28 And it shall come to pass, *that* like as I

*Ver. 19. Surely, &c.]* The smiting of the thigh is an expression of great surprise and concern. The Lord commands Ezekiel to deplore the miseries of his people, and to smite upon his thigh; chap. xxi. 12. We find the same custom in Homer, Xenophon, and other ancient writers. If, therefore, this be one of those natural expressions of the internal state of our mind, the phrase will imply true contrition, and in this view the climax will appear proper. See Pilkington's Remarks, Calmet, and Pope's Iliad, xvi. line. 155.

*Ver. 20. Is Ephraim my dear son? &c.]* Some render this passage, *Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a delightful child? Verily, the oftener I speak of him, I shall still remember him more and more: therefore my bowels yearn upon or towards him, &c.* Houbigant, however, defends the common reading; he thinks that God means to deny that Ephraim was his son, in order to shew him that his bowels were moved towards him solely through free mercy, and not on account of any merit or deservings of this people.

*Ver. 21. Set thee up way-marks]* The prophet bids them to think of preparing for their return to their own country; and, in order to that end, to set up land-marks to direct travellers in the right path. Instead of, *make thee high heaps*, Houbigant reads, *erect monuments of thy grief*; that is, tokens in thy return of thy late unhappy and captive state.

*Ver. 22. How long, &c.]* *How long wilt thou turn backward, or be a backslider, O rebellious daughter?* Houbigant. In which words, says he, the Jews are described in their present state, refusing assent to the Gospel, though they confess that they have erred in interpreting the prophets and promises of God. The next clause is understood by many of the best Christian writers of the miraculous conception of the Virgin Mary; nor, say they, will it be thought that such a prophecy concerning the conception of Christ is here inserted abruptly, if it be considered that as the coming of the Messiah is the foundation of all the promises both of the first and second covenant; so it con-

tains the most powerful argument to persuade men to obedience; and that covenant of which Christ was to be the mediator, is plainly foretold and described in the 31st and following verses of this chapter.

*Ver. 24. Husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks:]* These words are descriptive of the circumstances in which the ancestors of the Jews were placed upon their first introduction into the land of Canaan. The land was by divine appointment divided by lot among them, and every man had his separate portion or patrimony assigned him, which he was forbidden to alienate or exchange, and consequently was bound to cultivate himself for the maintenance of himself and family. Besides which, I conceive, there were certain districts of waste or unappropriated plain, known by the name of *the wilderness*, reserved for the purpose of grazing and feeding their cattle in common. Thus every citizen was literally a husbandman, without any exception, and also a shepherd, or feeder of flocks. Nor could any institution be better calculated to render a people virtuous and happy, by training them up to habits of sobriety, frugality, and industry, and restraining them from the pursuits of luxury and pernicious elegance; while the prodigious increase of their numbers under such circumstances afforded a sufficient proof, that through the divine blessing co-operating with the natural fertility of their soil, they were all plentifully supplied with every article requisite for their commodious and comfortable subsistence. Accordingly it here appears to be the avowed design of divine Providence, upon bringing the Jewish people back to inhabit once more their ancient land, to revive among them an institution so favourable to their happiness.

*Ver. 25. For I have satiated]* *For I have refreshed the thirsty soul, and every soul that pined for hunger have I filled.*

*Ver. 26. Upon this I awaked]* *But, considering these things, I awaked, and was delighted with my sleep.* Houbigant.

have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD.

29 ¶ In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

31 ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them; saith the LORD:

33 But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

35 ¶ Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, *and* the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night; which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar. The LORD of Hosts *is* his name.

36 If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, *then* the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

37 Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.

38 ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner.

bigant. The prophet, on awakening, perceived himself comforted by these agreeable promises. This is the conclusion of the preceding discourse.

Ver. 29, 30. *In those days, &c.*] See the note on Exod. xx. 5.

Ver. 31—34. *Behold, the days come, &c.*] The covenant here spoken of Jeremiah calls a *new covenant*; ver. 31. and what kind of covenant? Not such a one as was made with their fathers; ver. 32. This was declarative enough of its nature; yet, to prevent mistakes, he gives as well a positive as a negative description of it. *This shall be the covenant,—I will put my law in their inward parts, &c.* ver. 33. that is to say, “This law shall be spiritual, as the other given to their fathers was comparatively carnal; for the ceremonial law did not so scrutinize the heart, but rested chiefly or in a great measure in external obedience and observances. But to crown the whole we may observe, that Jeremiah fixed the true nature of the dispensation: *In those days they shall say no more, &c.* Now, &c. For *I will forgive, &c.*” ver. 34. For it was part of the sanction of the Jewish law, that children should bear the iniquity of their fathers. If it be objected, that it was not possible that the Jews, who believed the covenant of the law to be eternal, should look for a new covenant by the Messiah; it may be replied, that they could not well doubt of a second covenant, when a new covenant was plainly promised them in this passage of Jeremiah, different from

that made with their fathers on their coming out of Egypt. *In that he said a new covenant, he hath made the first old:* see Heb. viii. 13. Their ancient Targum, and their פרושים *Perushim*, or literal expositions, refer the fulfilling of this promise in Jeremiah to the days of the Messiah; and their old traditions to be read still in the Talmud, and in the books of Midrash, are the best comment upon it. Such as these: “The law of Moses shall last no longer than the coming of the Messiah; the week the Son of David comes, the law shall be made anew:” and they declare that most of their festivals, oblations, and distinctions of meats, obliged but for a time, and shall cease under the Messiah. See Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 272. and Peters on Job, p. 283. Instead of, *Although I was unto them;* ver. 32. Houbigant reads *I disregarded them, or regarded them not.* We shall enlarge farther on this subject when we come to the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Ver. 35. *Which divideth the sea*] *Who vibrates, or stirreth up the sea.* Schultens, and Houbigant.

Ver. 36, 37. *If those ordinances depart, &c.*] These promises cannot respect the carnal Jews; they certainly regard another people, who were taken into their place, and succeeded to their prerogatives and promises; that is, the church of Jesus Christ, which shall subsist for ever, consisting of all the faithful redeemed.

Ver. 38—40. *Behold, the days come, &c.*] The prophet here

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39 And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath.

40 And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse-

here describes the limits of that new Jerusalem which the Jews were to build upon their restoration. This must certainly refer to some future restoration; for that it was not fulfilled from the return out of Babylon to the days of Christ, we are assured from sacred history; where we read that mount *Goath* or *Golgotha* was situated without Jerusalem. The same may be said of *the valley of dead bodies*. As to *Gareb*, we know nothing certain. See Houbigant, and Zech. xiv. 10. We may also add, that the last clause of this chapter cannot refer to the Jerusalem which was rebuilt after the captivity, and which was plucked up and thrown down by the Romans. We must necessarily recur, therefore, either to some future building of that city, or to the church of Jesus Christ, (of the faithful saints of God,) which hath been assured that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. See Matt. xvi. 18.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The great mercy that God had yet in store for his faithful people is here at large declared, for the support of their faith and hope.

1. They shall all be his, and he will work for them a greater deliverance than when he brought them out of Egypt. *At the same time, in the latter days, will I be the God of all the families of Israel; he will take them into covenant with him, after their long alienation from him; and all shall know him, from the least to the greatest: and they shall be my people; drawn by his grace, and devoting themselves to his service.* For, as of old the people who escaped the sword of Pharaoh in Egypt found grace in the wilderness, being preserved and protected, *even Israel when I went to cause them to rest in Canaan; so now should they be preserved, and restored from their captive state to their own land.* But then the people might be apt to say, admitting his past deliverances, *The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, but now we see none of his tokens, and therefore conclude ourselves rejected: No, says God, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, am unchangeably the same, as determined as ever to bless my faithful spiritual Israel, and to receive every returning sinner into my fold: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee; I have delivered thee out of thy former troubles and from all thy captivity.* *Note;* (1.) Long afflictions are apt to breed despondence; but we should remember the past experience of God's people, and comfort our souls in hope. (2.) All the mercies of the faithful in time or eternity flow from the love of God; and every sinner in the world may say, We have not chosen him, but he hath chosen us, and called us by his grace; but he has delivered the penitent from the horrible pit of nature, constrained the believer by the cords of love to follow him; and, with the powerful energy of his grace, has overcome the strong bias of our corruptions, and drawn every faithful soul from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven. Lord, thus draw me that I may run after thee!

2. They shall be re-settled, and blest with plenty; either literally, when they should return from the captivity in

Babylon; or spiritually, when, being converted to the Lord, Israel should be presented a chaste virgin to Christ, be built up on him the sure foundation, a glorious church, and filled with the abundance of spiritual joy, far exceeding the music and dances with which they celebrated the ceremonial festivals. See Rev. xiv. 2—4. xix. 7—9. In all their country, even Samaria, the seat of idolatry, Gospel churches, represented by vines, should be planted, and enriched with numerous converts, from whom the planters, the ministers of the Gospel, would receive the most abundant fruit.

3. They shall with one heart, and in one place, unite in the worship of God. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah shall be no more divided, but *there shall be a day, the gospel-day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim, the ministers of the Gospel, shall say, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God.* Though Ephraim was chief in the revolt from the house of David, and the worship at Jerusalem, now they shall be among the first to express their zeal for the worship and ordinances of the church of Christ, the spiritual Zion, and confess him to be their Lord and their God. *Note;* They who were once chief rebels against God, do frequently, when converted, become his most zealous subjects and servants.

4. The Gentiles are called upon to rejoice in the conversion of Israel, and to pray for their complete salvation; for thus our praises for past mercies should ever quicken our supplications, and confirm our faith of greater yet in store for us.

5. Notwithstanding all difficulties in the way, God will lead them safely home; either from Babylon, when no bodily infirmities should detain them, God being their strength and helper; or this may be interpreted spiritually of their recovery from the bondage of corruption, when God will lead the blind in the way that they knew not, and make the lame man leap as an hart; when the travelling soul shall find rest from its pangs in Christ, and all the faithful, a great company which no man can number, shall be brought into the church, *with weeping* for past offences, while they look upon him whom they have pierced; *and with supplications* for present grace, which, in the most abundant measure, God will bestow, *like rivers of waters*, to refresh them in their journey to glory; and he will make straight paths for their feet, that they may not err; whilst, as a father, with tenderest regard he watches over, and in his arms supports his faithful children, as Israel and Ephraim would then become. *Note;* (1.) All who return to God in truth, come to him with weeping and sorrow for past guilt, and supplication for present help. (2.) When we follow a divine call, we are sure of a divine protection, and shall find comfort in all the way. (3.) They who have God for their father, can want no manner of thing that is good.

2dly, The distant nations, and the isles afar off, are called upon to hear and observe the designs of mercy and grace which God hath toward his Israel.

1. He

gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.

1. He will collect them from their dispersion, keep them as a shepherd his flock, and redeem them from the hand of all their mighty enemies, who had prevailed against them; which was true of Israel after the flesh, when they were restored from Babylon; and will be still more eminently fulfilled, when they are brought in from their present state of captivity. But it is also especially applicable to all the spiritual Israel of God, pardoned through the blood of Jesus, rescued from the power of sin and Satan, and gathered into the fold of Christ from the state of nature and corruption in which they lay before, amid the ungodly and wilfully impenitent.

2. They shall be filled with plenty, joy, and gladness. The returning captives with delight once more will stand on Zion's hill, and sing his praise, Ezra, iii. 11. His goodness shall engage their hearts to him, and all temporal good things shall abound: they shall flourish as a watered garden; their sorrows be at an end; the voice of joy again fill the streets of Jerusalem; and God's hand, seen in the visitation, shall turn their mourning and sorrow into overflowing joy and consolation; so that both priests and people shall be fatiated with God's goodness. The souls of sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, shall also find this prophecy more gloriously fulfilled, when brought into the church of Christ, the spiritual Zion, their hearts shall be enlarged with love and praise; and, moved by the experience of divine goodness, and flowing together to Jesus, they shall be filled with good things, the heavenly bread of Gospel grace, the word of life; the cheering wine of the great and precious promises, whereby we become partakers of a divine nature; the oil of gladness, the unction from the holy One; and all the best of blessings that he has to bestow; making the soul as a watered garden, abounding in all the gifts and graces of the Spirit, in all the fruits of righteousness; the effects of which will be, the exchange of all their mourning over their sins, corruptions, temptations, desertions, for joy in the sense of pardon, strength, and the light of God's countenance lifted up upon them; so that both ministers and people shall be satisfied with God's goodness. And as thus the tears at present are wiped away from the eyes of all the faithful, so shall they quickly go where they shall not sorrow any more at all, where every cause of it will be removed for ever, and their everlasting blessedness be complete. Hasten, Lord, this happy day!

3. The great cause of their grief would be removed. Rachel, as if rising out of her grave, which lay between Ramah and Bethlehem, to bewail the dreadful catastrophe, personates the Jewish mothers with inconsolable anguish weeping over their children slain or gone into captivity; but the Lord silences her mourning with assurances, that she has not borne these children in vain, since, though now they seemed lost irrecoverably, he would bring them to their own border again; so that there was still hope in their end, that it would be happy, and make the former days of sorrow forgotten. This prophecy, we are assured, had also a particular reference to the slaying of the infants by Herod, Matt. ii. 16—18. the massacre reaching from

Bethlehem to Ramah, and waking, as it were, Rachel, that mother of Israel, from her sepulchre, to lament the inhuman deed; and she is comforted with the assurance, that there is hope in their end, and at a resurrection-day these infants shall come from the land of Death, their enemy, to their own borders, the heavenly Canaan. *Note;* (1.) If we have hope in our end, we ought to be comforted under the troubles of the way. (2.) Parents are too apt to indulge inordinate sorrow for the death of their children, and refuse to be comforted; whereas, if they were gracious, they have cause to rejoice, and, if they died in infancy, have abundant reason to believe that *there is hope in their end*: we shall meet them in a better country.

3dly, We have,

1. Ephraim's repentance, representing the whole body of the Jewish people, and the figure of every awakened soul which returns to God. He bemoans himself in the remembrance of his past iniquities; acknowledges the justice of the chastisement which his sins had provoked; and reproaches his own stubbornness for struggling so long against God, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. He prays to the Lord for that converting grace which only can turn his perverse heart; and God will heat and work, and then shall the happy change be wrought, and he be enabled by faith to rest upon God, and claim an interest in his regard; *for thou art the Lord my God*. And when he can thus cast his burden upon the Lord, instantly the blessed effects appear: *Surely after that I was turned, I repented*; the sense of the divine love, now more experimentally tasted, wrought a deeper sense of the evil and ingratitude of sin, and a greater abhorrence of it: *and after that I was instructed*, in the knowledge of his own impurity and pollution, by the light of God's Spirit, and of the transcendent excellence and infinite grace of the neglected Saviour; *I smote upon my thigh*, with holy indignation at his baseness, stupidity, and perverseness: *I was ashamed, yea, even confounded*; scarcely able to look up to God from the consciousness of guilt, *because I did bear the reproach of my youth*; all his sins, long since committed and forgotten, rose up fresh to his memory; which, even from the earliest days of youth, gave him abundant cause for confusion and self-abhorrence.

2. God's arms of love are open to receive the returning prodigal; with delight he bends over him, and pours out his paternal heart. *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child?* it expresses with a kind of surprise, the joy that God takes in seeing such a change wrought upon a hardened sinner, and intimates his readiness to own the endeared relation of father, however unworthy the sinner is to bear the name of child: *a pleasant child* too, for when the penitent returns to God, all his evil is forgiven and forgotten, and he becomes dear to God, as if he had never offended. *For since I spake against him*, corrected him with some rebukes, and threatened him with more, *I do earnestly remember him still* with tender affection; *my bowels are troubled for him*, grieved for his afflictions, yearning over him, lying in the dust of humiliation: *I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord*; pardon all that is past, restore him to what he has lost, bestow new fa-

vours,

## C H A P. XXXII.

*Jeremiah, being imprisoned by Zedekiah for his prophesy, buyeth Hanameel's field. Baruch is charged to preserve the evidences, as tokens of the people's return. Jeremiah in his prayer complaineth to God. God comforteth the captives, and provideth a gracious return.*

[Before Christ 589.]

**T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah

vours, and make him the object of my grace and mercy. *Note*; (1.) God's compassions to his undutiful but returning children should teach parents never to be inexorable, however offended. (2.) When the heaviest afflictions for their sins light on those who have once known the Lord, it is not because he hath forgotten to be gracious, but that they have neglected to be dutiful; when they return to him, he will return to them, and will again be found a father of mercies.

3. The people of Israel, in the person of Ephraim, repentant and obtaining mercy with God, are called to return to their own land. *Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps, as a direction in the road, that they may not err; set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest from Judæa to Babylon; turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities, which God now would restore to them. How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter?* departing from God, and therefore wandering in endless mazes of error and misery; *for the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man, a mighty one, the Messiah, born of a virgin, by the immediate power of God, a strange and unheard-of conception; to him the gathering of people shall be, and the penitent be confident of their recovery, when this breaker shall go up before their king at the head of them.* *Note*; (1.) The incarnation of Jesus is the foundation of every blessing to God's believing people. (2.) Go about where we will, our souls never can find rest, till we return from our backsliding to the God from whom we have so greatly departed. (3.) We may expect many a difficulty in our path, when our faces are turned from the house of our prison towards God's Zion, and therefore we had need set our heart towards it, discouraged by no opposition.

4. Great shall be the peace and prosperity of God's Israel. Those who behold them will admire them, and wish them the best of blessings; *The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness, for such Jerusalem should become; and this, whatever reformation might be wrought by Nehemiah and Ezra, seems to have its full accomplishment yet to come.* In consequence of such piety, great plenty should be given them of all good things; their flocks shall abound, and a liberal provision be made to replenish and satisfy every weary and sorrowful soul; and this is especially to be referred to the spiritual Israel, to whom God will raise up pastors after his own heart, under whose ministry they shall be abundantly replenished, and their souls, weary and heavy-laden with guilt and sin, be refreshed with a sense of the love of

king of Judah, which *was* the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar.

2 For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which *was* in the king of Judah's house.

3 For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold,

Christ, and their sorrows exchanged for joy and peace in believing.

5. The vision afforded the prophet great satisfaction and delight. *Upon this I awaked, perhaps with the transport of joy that he felt at the revelation of these designs of grace to God's believing people; and beheld, for nothing fills a faithful minister's heart with greater pleasure, than the prospect of Christ's kingdom increasing; and my sleep was sweet unto me, peculiarly refreshing and strengthening.* *Note*; The mind much occupied on God will often in sleep find the communion still maintained with him, and the very dreams holy and comforting.

4thly, Farther discoveries of God's designs of grace towards his believing people are made.

1. They shall be multiplied exceedingly: as a field sown with seed, so shall both the men and cattle increase under the divine blessing; and, instead of their former desolations, God promises to turn his hand, and to be as careful to protect and prosper them, as ever he had watched over them to afflict and destroy them. *Note*; They are truly safe and happy who have God for their guardian.

2. They should no more be visited for their fathers' iniquities, and should have no more reason to complain that *the fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge*; being punished for the sins of their ancestors, particularly of Manasseh: *but now every one shall die for his own iniquity*; for though the nation be no more exposed to wrath as a body, sinful individuals should bear their own guilt. *Every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge*; and sin, however tempting to the eye, will ever be found sour in its effects, and produce much anguish to the soul, either in time or eternity.

3. God will establish his covenant with them: the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, of which all the Israel of God are partakers; not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also; for so the apostle understands these words, Heb. viii. 8—12. This covenant is called *new*, not as in *substance* different from that made with the people when they came out of Egypt, but in the *form* in which it was exhibited. Then it was delivered in type and figure, wrapped up under the figure of ceremonial rites and services; while now, as with open face, we behold the glory of God manifest in the face of Jesus Christ, and in the Gospel see the clearest discoveries of his grace. The first covenant made with them they quickly broke, by the most ungrateful departures from God, and setting up that hated thing idolatry; notwithstanding all the distinguishing kindness of God to them as a tender husband,

patient



I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it ;

4 And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes ;

5 And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD : though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper.

6 ¶ And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

7 Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that *is* in Anathoth : for the right of redemption *is* thine to buy *it*.

8 So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to

me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that *is* in Anathoth, which *is* in the country of Benjamin : for the right of inheritance *is* thine, and the redemption *is* thine ; buy *it* for thyself. Then I knew that this *was* the word of the LORD.

9 And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that *was* in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, *even* seventeen shekels of silver.

10 And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed *it*, and took witnesses, and weighed *him* the money in the balances.

11 So I took the evidence of the purchase, *both* that which was sealed *according* to the law and custom, and that which was open :

12 And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of

patient under their provocations, and wooing them to return to him.

4. The tenor of the covenant here promised displays wondrous mercy ; and the blessings are wholly spiritual, where God is all and in all. He engages to write his law upon the hearts of believers, and to strengthen them for the obedience which he demands. He *will be their God*, to bless them, and *they shall be his people*, feeling his powerful grace, and giving up themselves to his government. Abundance of divine knowledge shall then be diffused, and all the Israel of God be enriched with wisdom and spiritual understanding : and he concludes with the crowning blessing of all, *I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more* ; and every true Israelite is now entitled to these inestimable blessings.

5thly, We have,

1. The perpetuity of the church of Christ—the continuation of the great work of God, engaged for by Jehovah. That Lord of Hosts, whose power created, and whose arm upholds and guides, the ordinances of heaven in regular succession ; who first shut up the sea in bounds, and still, when it rages, causes the foaming billows to subside ; who meted out the heavens, and laid the foundation of the deep ; immense the space, unfathomable the abyss : this mighty God declares, that, sooner shall these heavenly orbs unruly leave their spheres, and the deep forsake its bed to cover again the earth, than *Israel* cease to be a nation ; yea, sooner shall impossibilities be practicable, the immensity of space *be measured*, and the foundations of the earth *be searched out*, by what supported, and how it is hung in air, than the Jews as a nation be cast off, so as to be utterly abandoned, notwithstanding *all that they have done*. And this will be equally true of the church of Christ—of the work of God in the latter days : it shall not decay, but shall increase till the whole lump be leavened, and all the people praise Jehovah.

2. The rebuilding and duration of the city of Jerusalem, the figure of the church. Though it would quickly be laid in ruins, it should be raised again as large as ever, and *be holy unto the Lord* ; no more polluted with idols, but wholly devoted to the worship and service of God. *It shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever* ; which, if applied to the city of Jerusalem, can only signify that it should continue a long time ; or, spoken of the church of Christ, the glorious revival of religion in the latter days, it may be taken in a most enlarged, extensive sense.

## C H A P. XXXII.

*Ver. 1. The word that came to Jeremiah*] This chapter has no connection with the preceding. Nebuchadrezzar came to besiege Jerusalem the 10th day of the 10th month of the 9th year of Zedekiah ; see chap. xxxix. 1. *iii.* 4. Jeremiah, at the beginning of the siege, foretold to Zedekiah, that the city should be taken, and the king sent captive to Babylon ; chap. xxxiv. 1—7. The king, irritated at his freedom, put him in prison, or at least in the court of the prison, which was in the palace : it was in this place that what we are now about to read happened. It was now the 10th year of Zedekiah, and Jeremiah had been confined a year during the siege of the city.

*Ver. 6—8. The word of the Lord came unto me*] Jeremiah, after having just informed us why he was put into prison, returns to his design, and tells us, that God had advised him, in a dream or vision, that Hanameel his cousin should come to him with the offer of a field in Anathoth ; the right of redeeming whereof was in him. Jeremiah might have given up his right, as not being in a situation to make the purchase ; but, understanding from the revelation of the Lord, that this affair had a mystical reference, and that he ought to accept the offer of his cousin, [*Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord, ver. 8.*] he purchased the field



Jeremiah; in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.

13 ¶ And I charged Baruch before them, saying,

14 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.

15 For thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.

16 ¶ Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying,

17. Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, *and* there is nothing too hard for thee:

18 Thou shewest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of Hosts *is* his name.

19 Great in counsel and mighty in work: for thine eyes *are* open upon all the ways of the sons of men; to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:

20 Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, *even* unto this day, and in Israel, and among *other* men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day;

21 And hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with great terror;

22 And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey;

23 And they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do: therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them:

24 Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass, and behold, thou seest *it*.

25 And thou hast said unto me, O Lord GOD, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

26 ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

27 Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?

28 Therefore, thus saith the LORD; Behold I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it:

29 And the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it, with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink-offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger.

30 For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD.

31 For this city hath been to me *as* a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from

field, as is afterwards related, with the full process and meaning of the affair.

Ver. 14. Put them in an earthen vessel] To preserve them from fire and moisture. See Calmet. It was common with the ancients to put their writings into earthen vessels. Origen found at Jericho a version of the Scriptures hid in an earthen pot. See Job, xix. 23, 24.

Ver. 18. And recompensest the iniquity of the fathers] This passage is easily reconciled with the 29th and following verses of the former chapter, by remembering that the

prophet is here speaking of the old, and there of the new covenant. See the notes on that passage.

Ver. 20. Which hast set signs and wonders] Who hast performed signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and who in Israel, and amongst other men, even to this day, hast made thyself a great name, as it now is. Houbigant.

Ver. 24. Behold the mounts] See Isai. xxxvii. 33. where the same word is used.

Ver. 25. For the city is given] Although the city be given. Houbigant.

Ver.

the day that they built it even unto this day ; that I should remove it from before my face,

32 Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

33 And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face : though I taught them, rising up early and teaching *them*, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.

34 But they set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to defile it.

35 And they built the high places of Baal, which *are* in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* unto Molech ; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

36 ¶ And now therefore, thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence ;

37 Behold, I will gather them out of all

countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath ; and I will bring them again unto this place ; and I will cause them to dwell safely :

38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God :

39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them :

40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

41 Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

42 For thus saith the LORD ; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.

43 And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, *It is* desolate, without man or beast ; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

44 Men shall buy fields for money, and

*Ver. 31. For this city has been to me, &c.]* David was the builder of that part of Jerusalem called *Sion* ; therefore it was styled *the city of David*. He also enlarged the whole city, and made it the seat of his kingdom ; but we do not read that idolatry was committed here in David's time ; so that the expression seems to be hyperbolical. See *Isai. xlvi. 8*. If we take the words in a stricter sense, they must be understood of the time of Solomon, who beautified the city by erecting the temple and other stately buildings, but afterwards defiled it with idolatry. Calmet has endeavoured to shew, that Jerusalem, from the time when it was in the possession of the Jebusites till its final destruction, continually provoked the Lord by its crimes and infidelity.

*Ver. 36. And now therefore] But now notwithstanding.*

*Ver. 37. Behold, I will gather them]* This and the following verses, to the 41st, respect such a return from the Babylonish captivity, as must and ought to be understood of the preaching of the Gospel, of the manifestation of the Messiah, of the new covenant, of the foundation of the Christian church, and of the final consequences thereof. For example, we cannot be assured that the *Jews ever dwelt safely in their place*, *ver. 37*. That they had *all one heart*, and walked in *one way*, *ver. 39*, &c. (see chap. xxxi.

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31, &c.) But in the 43d verse the return from Babylon is foretold in these words, *Fields shall be bought, &c.* as Jeremiah had foretold in his own person, when he bought a field by the right of redemption. Nor is there added concerning this return, that *God would make an everlasting covenant with the Jews*, or that *he would plant them with his whole heart and soul* ; to give the Jews to understand that a different return was meant, and that this from Babylon was only a pledge of another to be expected by the Jews, after they saw that the promises of God were not completed in that first return. See Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The fatal hour approached of Jerusalem's destruction ; already the Chaldean army surrounded the walls ; the prophecies of Jeremiah, which were before despised, we should have thought would now carry conviction to every heart, and his advice be sought and followed implicitly in the present emergency. How different the case !

1. Behold him a prisoner, shut up by the king's order in the court of the king's house ; a place where, probably, the state-prisoners were kept. The cause of his confinement was, his declaration that Jerusalem should infallibly be taken ; their desperate resistance against the besiegers

S

be

subscribe evidences, and seal *them*, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and

in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD.

be fruitless; and Zedekiah himself attempt to escape in vain: he should be seized, delivered up to the victorious king of Babylon, see his indignation, and hear him pronounce judgment upon him; be led into an ignominious captivity, and there abide, till death came as a kind visitant to release him from his miseries. This prophecy, so far from humbling, exasperated them against him; and, left by his preaching he should discourage the hearts of the people to surrender, they put him under this confinement, though not so rigorous but that he was allowed the air and the company of his friends. *Note;* (1.) They who will go on God's messages must not be shocked at a prison. (2.) Nothing will convince hardened sinners: even when God's judgments begin to operate, they flatter themselves that they shall weather the storm.

2. In the prison he becomes a purchaser. Hanameel, his uncle's son, had a field to dispose of, and, as nearest of kin, the *right of redemption* was in Jeremiah. The Lord let him know in the prison, that an offer of selling it would be made to him, as happened, and that it was his will that he should buy the land, which was in the suburbs of Anathoth, a city of the priests, and which one of them might lawfully transfer to another; or some inheritance by the mother's side, which Hanameel had a right to part with. The bargain is easily made, the money paid; the land conveyed with all the usual formalities; the deeds consigned to the care of Baruch, in the presence of the witnesses who subscribed them, to be set in an earthen vessel, and hid probably in the field: for though the destruction of the city and country by the Chaldeans was certain, and therefore the money might appear lost; yet God, on whose veracity he could depend, assured him that the time would come when every man's property would be restored, and houses, fields, and vineyards be bought and sold as usual: and it was designed for an encouragement of the faith and hope of the people, when they saw the prophet himself acting in the full assurance of the truth which he declared. *Note;* When ministers shew themselves influenced by the word that they preach, and fully persuaded of it, its effects will be more powerful on their hearers.

2dly, Having transacted this business, and delivered the writings to Baruch's care, the prophet directs his prayer to God, grieved for the calamities impending, and in some perplexity how the desolations ready to be accomplished on this people could correspond with those promises of their restoration.

1. He adores the infinite perfections of God: *his almighty power*, manifested in the amazing works of creation, which nothing can control or resist: *his boundless mercy*, shewing loving-kindness to thousands, yea, to all that seek him: *his inflexible justice*, in punishing sin in those who hate him, upon children's children, that copy after their fathers' transgressions: *his universal sovereignty*, the great, the mighty God, the Lord of Hosts, who doeth whatsoever pleaseth

him, and whom all the armies of heaven and earth obey: *his infinite wisdom*; great in counsel, his designs planned with the most consummate knowledge, and carried into execution with the most irresistible energy: *omniscient*; he beholds all the ways of the sons of men, and knoweth every device of their hearts: *the eternal judge*; who will in the day of recompense render to every man according to his works.

2. He recounts the wonders that he had wrought for his people of old, evident in the plagues of Egypt, in their deliverance thence, and in all the dispensations of his providence toward them from that day, bringing them into Canaan, according to the promise made to their fathers, as well as in what he did among the nations around them; in all which he acquired to himself great glory, and appeared worthy of their highest praise. *Note;* The gracious dealings of God toward his people should ever afford matter for our thanks, and encouragement to our faith.

3. He laments their disobedience, as the cause of all the miseries to which they were now exposed. By a long train of rebellions they had brought their present evils upon themselves; and the prophetic word, which they had disregarded, began to receive its terrible accomplishment. Behold, the besiegers compass the city, and raise their mounts and batteries against it; so that their case was desperate; the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.

4. He lays the doubts and perplexities of his mind before God. *Thou hast said unto me*, in this ruinous situation of affairs, *Buy thee the field, and take witnesses*; and this seemed strange, when the land was devoted to destruction. *Note;* (1.) God's providences sometimes appear to contradict his promises. (2.) When we have God's orders, we have nothing to do but obey, and trust him with the issue. (3.) When we are in the dark concerning God's dispensations, we may humbly by prayer beg to be taught of him.

3dly, We have here an immediate answer given to the prophet's prayer, and his mind fully satisfied. The destruction wrought by the Chaldeans is perfectly consistent with the promise, that the land should be re-inhabited, and fields and vineyards again be bought and sold as before.

1. The desolations of the city and nation are determined by that almighty Jehovah, who is the *God of all flesh*, who are weak and unable to resist him; corrupt, and therefore provoking his wrath. Nothing is *too hard* for him to do; he can save or destroy, against all human probabilities. This impregnable fortress, as it seems, must totter, since such is his decree, before the arms of the Chaldean monarch; the city and temple be burnt with fire, with all the houses where incense had been offered to Baal; and this was the just judgment due to their aggravated provocations. *From their youth*, the time when first they were formed into a people, or from the earliest infancy, corruption

C H A P. XXXIII.

*God promiseth to the captivity a gracious return, a joyful state, a settled government, Christ, the branch of righteousness, a continuance of kingdom and priesthood, and a stability of a blessed seed.*

[Before Christ 589.]

**M**OREOVER the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the second time,

ruption being in our nature from the womb, they had transgressed, and by their idolatries provoked God's anger, seeming as if they studied to offend him by their daring impiety. Ever since the day when Jerusalem was built, either by the Jebusites, or from the days of David, who so greatly beautified and enlarged it, the sins of the inhabitants had been a continual provocation, for which the Lord had long threatened to remove them from before his face into a miserable captivity. All orders and degrees of men were involved in the common guilt, from the lowest to the king on the throne; and even the priests and prophets, who should have been the reprovers of others by their word and example, were chief in the transgression. In vain did God send them warning upon warning; they turned a deaf ear to his faithful prophets, and refused to bend either under the rebukes of his word, or the corrections of his providence. Nay, to such a height of effrontery did they carry their impiety, that even in that temple, built for his honour, they set up their hated idols, and with unnatural cruelty, as well as horrid profaneness, burnt even their children in the fire to Moloch, or caused them to pass between the flames, as a lustration and dedication to the idol's service. For such sins no wonder that judgment came upon them to the uttermost; and that after the desolating scourges of the sword, the famine, and pestilence had wasted them, the remnant was sent into a miserable captivity.

2. Notwithstanding, God hath mercy still in store. Though the city is given up, and the land desolate, without man or beast, there shall be a door of hope opened; for in the worst of times we should not despair. Many great and precious promises are here delivered.

[1.] They shall return, after seventy years, from all the countries whither in anger God had dispersed them, and dwell in peace, under the divine protection, in their own land, acknowledged again of God as his people, and professing their fidelity and allegiance to him as their God.

[2.] God will make with them an everlasting covenant, the tenor of which on his part is most amazingly gracious. (1.) He promises to put his fear in their hearts, the principle of all true wisdom and godliness. (2.) He will give them one heart and one way, a single eye to God's glory; fervent charity among themselves; one path of grace and holiness in which they should walk, and leave their blessing and good examples as the best inheritance to their children's children. *Note;* All who have truly given up their hearts to Christ, whatever lesser differences may subsist between them, will ever be united in love, and walk in one way of holiness, as Christ also walked. (3.) He will not turn away from doing them good. Whatever aspect his providences

while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

2 Thus saith the LORD the maker thereof, the LORD that formed it, to establish it; the LORD is his name;

3 Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

may have, all shall work together for the benefit of those who embrace this covenant, and, through his almighty grace, fulfil their part of it, give him their hearts, and live to his glory.

[3.] His temporal, as his spiritual mercies, shall be great. God will plant them firmly in their own land; his whole heart and soul shall be, as it were, firmly engaged in it, such delight will he take to do them good. And this shall be as surely accomplished as the evil which he had brought upon them.

[4.] Then the whole country should be inhabited, property secure, estates valuable, and no land want a purchaser; so that Jeremiah may be at rest respecting that which he has bought; and it is the earnest of what shall in that day be the case: it will then be found that the money is not laid out unprofitably, when the Lord shall thus cause their captivity to return. Some apply this spiritually to the deliverance from the bondage of corruption, and those purchased possessions provided for the faithful in the heavenly Canaan.

C H A P. XXXIII.

THIS chapter contains a prophecy, which, though applicable in some parts to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, cannot however be so understood upon the whole, for reasons already touched upon in the introductory note to chap. xxx. and which hold equally good in the present instance. God reveals his gracious purpose of healing the wounds of Jerusalem, restoring the captivity both of Israel and Judah, forgiving their sins, and distinguishing them with such blessings, as to strike the astonished nations with fear and trembling, ver. 1—9. He foretels, that the land, whose desolation they deplored, should again flourish with multitudes both of men and cattle; ver. 10—13. He confirms his former promise of establishing a kingdom of righteousness in a branch of the house of David, and rendering it perpetual, together with the priesthood of the sons of Levi; ver. 14—18. He declares his covenant in this respect with David and the Levites to be as sure as the covenant of night and day; ver. 19—22. And to remove the reproach of having cast off those families, whom he had once distinguished by his choice, he renews his protestations of restoring the seed of Jacob, and of appointing the seed of David to rule over them for ever; ver. 23—to the end.

*Ver. 2. The maker thereof]* Who made the earth. **H**ou-  
bigant.

*Ver. 3. Call unto me]* The spirit of prophecy commonly came upon the prophets in such a manner that they could not resist its impressions. At other times they prayed for, they earnestly requested, the influence of the Spirit: Daniel

4 For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah; which are thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword;

5 They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but *it is* to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city.

6 Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.

7 And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first.

8 And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.

9 And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

10 ¶ Thus saith the LORD; Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say *shall be* desolate, without man and without beast, *even* in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, with-

out man, and without inhabitant, and without beast,

11 The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of Hosts; for the LORD *is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever: *and* of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.

12 ¶ Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Again in this place, which is desolate, without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be an habitation of shepherds causing *their* flocks to lie down.

13 In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth *them*, saith the LORD.

14 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

15 ¶ In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of Righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely, and this *is* the

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intreated the Lord to give him the explanation of his visions. See Dan. ix. 2—4. x. 3—11. Houbigant reads it, *Inquire of me, and I will answer thee.*

Ver. 4. *Which are thrown down by the mounts*] *Which are thrown down for the raising of mounts; ver. 5. and to give space for those who are about to come to fight with the Chaldeans; and to fill up the number of the dead bodies of men, &c.* Houbigant. Others read—*Mounts, and by the sword of the Chaldeans, coming to fight, and to kill them.*

Ver. 6. *Behold, &c.*] *Behold, I will bring them, &c.* “I will restore them to their wonted prosperity; I will re-establiſh their walls; I will repair their breaches.”

Ver. 8. *And I will cleanse them*] “I will no more remember their iniquity, or the iniquity of their fathers; their captivity, and the evils which they have endured, shall be under my grace a kind of baptism to purify them.” But, as Houbigant well observes, God will then only pardon *all the iniquities* of the Jews when they enter into the Christian church, and then the nations shall be

astonished: see the next verse; where, instead of, *They shall fear and tremble*, he reads, *They shall wonder and be astonished*; and instead of *it* in that verse, *they and them*.

Ver. 11. *Praise the Lord, &c.*] By referring to Ezra, iii. 11. you will find that the Jews, on their return from captivity, made use of this hymn.

Ver. 13. *Shall the flocks pass again, &c.*] See Lev. xxvii. 32. Virgil alludes to the same custom when he says, *Bis die numerant ambo pecus*: “Twice each day they count my goats and sheep.” Eclogue iii. The Chaldee explains the phrase of the Messiah: “My people shall be instructed and formed under the hand of the Messiah.” See Calmet.

Ver. 15, 16. *In those days, &c.*] See the note on chap. xxiii. 6. Many commentators render the last clause of the 16th verse thus, *And this is he that shall proclaim to her, or, And he that shall call her, is the Lord, &c.* Such qualities are given to the person here called *the Branch*, as can belong to no other than Jesus Christ the Son of David, the

*name* wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our Righteousness.

17 ¶ For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel;

18 Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt-offerings, and to kindle meat-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.

19 ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying,

20 Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season;

21 *Then* may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.

22 As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David, my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.

23 ¶ Moreover, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,

24 Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them.

the first-born of the Father. See the 17th and 18th verses.

*Ver. 17. David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne, &c.]* Or rather, *There shall not be a failure in the line of David of one sitting, &c.* From the Babylonish captivity to the coming of Christ, David was without a successor of his family sitting upon the throne of Judah or Israel, in any sense whatsoever. And from the destruction of Jerusalem to the present time, the Jews have had neither a king nor a regular priesthood belonging to their nation. So that hitherto there has been a failure and interruption both in the royal line of David, and in the sacerdotal one of Levi. A plain proof that the prophecy alludes not to any time that is already past, but respects what is to come. It is true indeed, that in a spiritual sense the kingdom of Christ, the son of David, has been for some time established over those whom the Apostle calls *the Israel of God*, Gal. vi. 16. and *the children of Abraham*, Gal. iii. 7. meaning thereby all true believers, whether of the Jews or of the Gentiles. And it is true also, that in the church of Christ there has been a constant and uninterrupted succession of persons to perform the public offices of religion in the room of, although not taken out of, the priests the Levites. And the perpetuity of this kingdom and this ministry is, I know, in the opinion of many learned expositors, looked upon as a full and authentic completion of the intention of this prophecy. This, however, seems to be spiritualizing too far, when the case admits of a more direct and literal interpretation. The days, it is evident, are not yet arrived, though they certainly will come, for the performance of God's good promise concerning the restoration of the house of Israel and the house of Judah under Christ, **THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Admitting this, and that all the families of Israel shall again be re-established in their own possessions, what improbability is there, that the two families of David and Levi may actually revert also to their ancient privileges, subject only to the supreme authority of the Messiah, and continue to enjoy them, as it is here expressly declared, in uninterrupted succession to the end of the world?

*Ver. 24. The two families]* The Jews indirectly accuse

God of breach of promise, in saying that he had rejected the kingdoms of Israel and Judah; which made the whole race of Jacob: others understand the tribes of Judah and Levi. The Lord fully answers this objection in the subsequent verses.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jeremiah still continued under confinement, but God's visits made the prophet's prison a more desirable place than the palace of Zedekiah. The second time a message of peace is sent by him to encourage the drooping hopes of the people, ready to fall under their enemies, and sink into despair.

1. The prophecy is from the Lord, whose power is able to accomplish all his promises; the maker and former of the earth, and of all things therein. Jehovah is his name, self-sufficient, and faithful to his word.

2. Though God promises, the prophet must in prayer intercede for the fulfilment. *Call unto me, and I will answer thee*, for promises do not supersede but encourage our supplications; and *show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not*; either the strange deliverance of the people from Babylon, when their situation seemed desperate, an event which no human foresight could discover; or the greater wonders of gospel-grace, of which this temporal redemption was the figure.

3. Notwithstanding their present miseries, their houses, even those of their kings and nobles, battered down; their auxiliaries, or the besieged, slain under the ruins; or the houses which remained, filled, through famine and pestilence, with the dead corpses of those who were slain in God's anger because of their wickedness; yet, deplorable as their situation is, it is not desperate: *Behold, I will bring it health and cure*, restore their desolations; *I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth*; peace to enjoy their blessings, and truth, the true worship of God and fidelity between man and man restored: *and I will cause the captivity of Judah and Israel to return*; many of the other tribes returning to Judaea with those of Judah and Benjamin; *and I will cleanse them from all their iniquity*, the cause of their sufferings; both pardoning their guilt, and delivering them from the power of sin. *And it shall be so.*

25 Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night; and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth;

26 Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob,

and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

*me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour before all the nations;* God would glorify himself in shewing them such mercy, which would be attended with the most blessed effects; their prosperity not breeding security and neglect of God, but engaging them more faithfully to serve him, and making them jealous of offending a God so gracious. And this was still more eminently fulfilled by the coming of the Messiah; who, as the Sun of Righteousness, arose with *healing* in his wings; *peace* was established by him between God and fallen man, and abundance of peace diffused in the sinner's conscience. *Truth*, the only true way of approaching God, and walking so as to please him, was by him revealed; then the dreadful *captivity* of sin was loosed, and the souls of men delivered from the bondage of corruption. In a dying Saviour's blood a fountain was opened, that *cleanseth* from all sin; and, now rescued from the power, as well as guilt of their iniquities, the people of Jesus appear pleasing in his sight, an honour to their profession, and engaged, by all the goodness that they have tasted, with godly jealousy and fear to work out their salvation, diligent to please, and careful not to offend their merciful Saviour and reconciled God. Blessed and happy are they who experience this great redemption, begun in present pardon, peace, grace, and holiness; these pious souls, faithful unto death, shall see it shortly completed in glory everlasting.

2dly, We have farther blessings promised to the people of God.

1. The voice of joy shall return to Zion. The desolations under which it had lain, made many abandon themselves to despair of ever seeing the country raised from its ruins; but God will again replenish Jerusalem and the cities of Judah with multitudes of inhabitants; then the bridal music shall be heard, and the more delightful sounds of sacred melody echo through the courts of the temple; when this fresh instance of his astonishing goodness would make them with sacred rapture repeat the well-known psalm, where the burden of each verse is, "For his mercy endureth for ever." This may also be referred to the times of the Gospel, the preaching of which would diffuse the greatest joy and gladness, and awaken the warmest praises for the infinite mercies of redeeming love, when all other sacrifices should cease; but the spiritual sacrifices of praise shall never cease; begun in the church on earth, and continued by the glorified saints in heaven to eternity.

2. Plenty shall fill their land. The long-deserted fields shall now again be covered with bleating flocks, the shepherds in full security feeding them, and all the land over-spread with cattle, both mountains and valleys, *passing under the hands of him that telleth them*. Mystically, this may be interpreted of the ministers of Christ, *the shepherds*, and his believing people, *the flock* of his pasture; vast in multitude, and feeding securely under the divine protection.

3. Greater than all temporal mercies, the divine Messiah is promised. Long he had been expected as the hope of his Israel, and now the fulness of time approaches when he shall be revealed. *In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of Righteousness to grow up unto David; the Messiah, the great Author of all Righteousness, and raised up to sit on the throne of his father David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land*, all judgment being committed to him; and in righteousness he will discharge the trust committed to him, executing vengeance on the enemies of his faithful people, vindicating them from wrong, and justifying them from every accusation of sin or Satan. *In these days shall Judah, his faithful followers, be saved from all the powers of Satan and corruption; and Jerusalem shall dwell safely, delivered from the fear of every foe, and no more under condemnation; the faithful enjoying peace with God, and in their consciences, which no enemy can disturb or take away from those who cleave to this great Redeemer: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness; his church being joined to Christ, she bears his name, is justified before God by his righteous obedience to the death of the cross, is made partaker of a divine nature, and stands complete in him.*

3dly, The branch from the root of Jesse being promised, the perpetuity of his kingdom is ensured.

1. Christ's kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, for in him alone can this promise be fulfilled. The house of David is long since extinct, or at least his descendants are utterly unknown, and for near two thousand years have been without the shadow of sovereignty; but Jesus reigns, and shall for ever sit on the throne of glory, while sun and moon endure.

2. He will have an everlasting priesthood, of which the Aaronical priesthood was typical. This has long since been abolished, but Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us; and, having offered one sacrifice for sin, is gone up into the presence of God, to plead continually the efficacy of that oblation once offered, and in virtue thereof to obtain eternal redemption for all the faithful: and this seems rather the sense of the prophecy, than either the application of it to the Christian ministry, or to believers in general, who are indeed a holy priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices to God through Christ Jesus.

3. God will multiply his seed beyond the stars of heaven, or the sand of the sea-shore, *and the Levites that minister unto me* (the faithful, so called because all of them are his ministers, consecrated for him, and offering continually before him the sacrifices of prayer and praise).

4. The glorious revival of religion in the latter days shall continue to the end of time. During their captivity, many of the unbelieving Jews in despondence, or their enemies in triumph, were ready to conclude that the Lord had cast off the two families whom he had chosen, the



## C H A P. XXXIV.

*Jeremiah prophesieth the captivity of Zedekiah and of the inhabitants of the city. The princes and the people, having dismissed their bond-servants, re-assume them, contrary to their covenant with God. Jeremiah, for their disobedience, giveth them and Zedekiah into the hands of their enemies in the name of Jehovah.*

[Before Christ 605.]

**T**HE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof, saying,

2 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire:

3 And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand, and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon.

4 Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Ze-

dekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of thee, thou shalt not die by the sword:

5 But thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee; and they will lament thee, saying, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD.

6 Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem,

7 When the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defended cities remained of the cities of Judah.

8 ¶ *This is* the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them;

9 That every man should let his manservant, and every man his maid-servant, being an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother.

house of David and Aaron, or the two nations of Israel and Judah; *thus they have despised my people*, as if they were abandoned, and no more likely to be a nation; swallowed up by their conquerors, and ready to sink into oblivion. But sooner shall the succession of day and night be at an end, or the revolutions of the heavenly bodies be interrupted, than the seed of Jacob be thus cast off, or a ruler of their own nation be wanting to reign over them, when God shall in mercy turn their captivity. What God did in bringing his people from Babylon, but imperfectly answers the greatness of this promise; and therefore we must look farther, to the church of the faithful, the Israel of God; who, to whatever state of sufferings they may for a while be exposed, shall still be preserved under the government of Christ their king: their captivity from the bondage of corruption God will cause to cease; and, though for a time they may groan under antichristian tyranny, God will break the yoke from off their necks; so that neither men nor devils shall ever be able to root out their memorial from the earth. We see that the church of Christ has, in virtue of this promise, stood the fiercest fires of persecution during almost eighteen hundred years; and we may rest assured that she will not only be preserved to the end,—the work of God shall still proceed and prosper,—but that her latter end shall have vast increase, and all her enemies be made her footstool.

## C H A P. XXXIV.

*Ver. 1. The word, &c.]* We do not know exactly at what time this happened; but we know that it was in the 11th year of Zedekiah, and during the interval between the raising of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and his return to that city, after having repulsed the king of Egypt, who was coming to the succour of Zedekiah: see chap. xxxvii. 5. Jeremiah was not at that time in prison. See the 4th, 14th, and 15th verses of that chapter, and chap. xxxii.

*Ver. 8. To proclaim liberty unto them, &c.]* By the law of Moses, Exod. xxi. 2. Deut. xv. 12. the Israelites were not allowed to detain their brethren of the Hebrew race in perpetual bondage, but were required to let them go free after having served six years. This law had, it seems, fallen into disuse; but king Zedekiah, upon the approach of the Chaldean army, whether from religious motives, or a political view to employ the men who were set free in the service of the war, engaged the people in a covenant to act conformably to the law; and they released their brethren accordingly. But no sooner were their fears abated by the retreat of the Chaldeans, than, in defiance of every principle of religion, justice, and humanity, they imposed the yoke of servitude anew upon those unhappy persons. Archbishop Usher computes the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign to have been the sabbatical year, and supposes

10 Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his man-servant, and every one his maid-servant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed and let *them* go.

11 But afterward they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids.

12 ¶ Therefore, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

13 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying,

14 At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear.

15 And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had made a

covenant before me in the house which is called by my name.

16 But ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids.

17 Therefore, thus saith the LORD; Ye have not hearkened unto me in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword; to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

18 And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof,

19 The princes of Judah and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf;

20 I will even give them into the hand of

supposes that on this account the covenant of general release was entered into at the beginning of that year. But the sabbatical year, which was every seventh year from that in which the Israelites entered into possession of the land of Canaan, had nothing at all to do with the release of servants. In the year of sabbath they were only restrained from sowing their ground, and pruning their vineyard. But every seventh year from the beginning of their service the Hebrew bond-slaves were to be discharged. Six years they were to serve, and in the seventh they were to go out free. Only the fiftieth year, or year of Jubilee, was also to be a time of general release; Lev. xxv. 39—41. That the sabbatical year was so, I see not the least reason to conclude, but quite the contrary.

*Ver. 10. Now, &c.] And all the princes, &c. consented that every one, &c. They consented, and let them go.*

*Ver. 14. At the end, &c.] Within the term of seven years.*

*Ver. 15. And ye were now turned.] The covenant was properly such a one as that which Josiah and all the people formerly made in the house of the Lord, whereby they obliged themselves to worship him, to observe his laws in general, and this, of giving freedom to their servants, in particular.*

*Ver. 17. Behold, I proclaim a liberty.] "I will now make public proclamation, that I give free commission and*

"liberty for the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, to destroy you utterly." The reader will observe a turn upon the words in this denunciation, which is not uncommon in the sacred writers.

*Ver. 18. When they cut the calf in twain, &c.] That is, "When they made a solemn covenant and alliance with me; wherein it was usual to pass between the parts of the sacrifice; as Abraham is described to have done," Gen. xv. 9, &c.*

*Ver. 19. The eunuchs.] Who made part of the court-officers. See 2 Kings, xxv. 19.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This prophecy in its date precedes the former, being, it seems, the cause of Jeremiah's commitment to the court of the prison, chap. xxxii. 2—5. It was directed particularly to Zedekiah, and, though a king, the prophet faithfully delivered it; for they who will be true to their trust must neither flatter nor fear the greatest. Matters were now brought to a very desperate point: but two cities, Azekah and Lachish, remained to Judah; and these, as well as Jerusalem, were now invested by the army of Nebuchadnezzar; yet Zedekiah and the people persisted in their obstinacy, and refused to surrender. Hereupon,

1. Their doom is read. Jerusalem should be burned to the ground, the king himself made a prisoner, and, though attempting

their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.

21 And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you.

22 Behold, I will command, saith the LORD, and cause them to return to this city; and they

shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.

## C H A P. XXXV.

*By the obedience of the Rechabites Jeremiah condemneth the disobedience of the Jews. God blesteth the Rechabites for their obedience.*

[Before Christ 606.]

**T**HE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,

attempting to escape, should be seized and brought to the king of Babylon, and carried by him into a miserable captivity—the just punishment of his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, and disobedience to the warnings of God.

2. A gleam of mercy breaks through the gloom. God assures him, and his word cannot fail, that he shall not be put to death, but *die in peace*, on his bed; treated kindly by the king of Babylon; and it may include, *in peace* with God, his sufferings in Babylon having been blessed to bring about his repentance; and, though a captive, he should be honourably interred, with the usual respect paid to the kings of Judah, and with the lamentations of the people, deeply afflicted at his loss. *Note*; They who at last, though late, return to God, will find peace with him; and, however severe their afflictions may have been, they will have reason to bless God for them as their chief mercies. The prison that leads to repentance is far preferable to a palace which proves the scene of iniquity.

2dly, The second prophecy contained in this chapter was delivered during that interval when Nebuchadnezzar had raised the siege of Jerusalem to go to meet the army of Egypt which was advancing to relieve it.

1. The occasion of the prophecy was, their unjust and hypocritical conduct toward their servants. The law had enjoined them every seventh year to release their brethren, who for poverty or debt had been sold for bondmen, in gratitude for their own deliverance from Egypt. But this, among their other sins, their fathers had neglected, and they kept them still in servitude, notwithstanding the year of release was past: and, custom having authorized the evil, it was become general. But, when the Chaldean army besieged the city, as the prophets, no doubt, had before rebuked them for such an avowed disobedience to the law, they now laid the matter to heart, convinced of the evil of the practice; an edict was published by the king, princes, and people, for a general release; and, to confirm it, they made a solemn covenant in the temple, to abide by God's law for the future, passing between the parts of the divided calf, as imprecating God's wrath, that they might be thus cut asunder, if they failed of performing their engagement. In consequence of this, all their servants and handmaids were set free, as was right in God's sight; but when the siege was raised, and the storm seemed to be blown over, they again forced them to return to servitude, committing a most flagrant piece of injustice to

them, playing a part most hypocritical and affronting to God, and justly bringing upon their heads the curse of a broken covenant. *Note*; (1.) The reformations which fear and danger make are seldom sincere or abiding. (2.) The most solemn bonds and vows will not long restrain those whose hearts are not right with God. (3.) If God's reprieves are abused, and made an encouragement to persist in the ways of wickedness, he will then proceed to execution; for none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered.

2. God pronounces judgment upon them for this treacherous dealing. He dismisses them from his service and protection, and devotes them to famine, pestilence, and the sword; the men who have transgressed the covenant, shall be as the calf which they divided, even the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the eunuchs, or officers about the court, the priests, and all the people of the land, who had so solemnly sworn to observe it. Given up into the hands of the Chaldeans, they are doomed to a miserable death; their carcases, unburied, shall be cast as dung upon the earth, and be meat for the beasts and birds. Nor may they think, because the king of Babylon is gone up from them, that they are safe. He shall return infallibly, besiege, storm, and burn Jerusalem, with all the other cities of Judah, spread desolation on the land, and leave it as an uninhabited wilderness, dragging Zedekiah and his princes, with the remnant that escape the sword, into an ignominious captivity, to know themselves the miseries of that servitude which they had made so heavy to their brethren. *Note*; (1.) The sinner's security is a sad preface of his destruction. (2.) Promising beginnings, with which the end does not correspond, only bring more aggravated guilt, and surer destruction. Apostates, who were once professors, shall receive greater damnation.

## C H A P. XXXV.

*Ver. 1. The word, &c.]* What is related in this chapter happened long before that which is mentioned in the preceding chapters. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem twice in the reign of Jehoiakim: the first time in the fourth year of this prince's reign, and the second three or four years after. It is most probable, that Jeremiah speaks here of the second siege; when the Rechabites, to avoid falling into the hands of the enemy, retired to Jerusalem. See *ver. 11.* and *Calmet.*

2 Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.

3 Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites ;

4 And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which *was* by the chamber of the princes, which *was* above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door :

5 And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.

6 But they said, We will drink no wine : for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, *neither* ye nor your sons for ever :

7 Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have *any* : but all your days ye shall dwell in tents ; that ye may live many days in the land where ye *be* strangers.

8 Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters ;

9 Nor to build houses for us to dwell in : neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed :

10 But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.

11 But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem, for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians : so we dwell at Jerusalem.

*Ver. 2. Go unto the house of the Rechabites*] Several learned men are of opinion, that the Jonadab mentioned in this chapter was not the same with him who is mentioned 2 Kings, x. 15. for they think it is not likely that a man addicted to so quiet and retired a life as he instituted, would have come to meet Jehu. But why might not Jonadab, how well soever he loved retirement, come upon this occasion to congratulate Jehu's zeal against idolatry, and to advise and encourage him to proceed in fulfilling the word of God revealed to him? The reason is obvious, why Jehu might be glad of the countenance and company of such a man, whose known piety would gain him more respect than the attendance of any great captain could procure him. But though Jonadab the son of Rechab is allowed to have been a good man, yet it does not therefore follow that he received the ancient rules of the Rechabites, as some think, purely upon a religious account, but as a matter of policy. The history is this: the Rechabites were of the race of Hobab or Jethro the Kenite, priest of Midian, and father-in-law to Moses: 1 Chron. ii. 55. So that the Rechabites were Midianites, and the Midianites were dwellers in tents from the beginning; for in this manner Abraham lived while he sojourned in the land of Canaan; and, in imitation of him, the Midianites, who were of his posterity, might do the same. Now, when the children of Hobab, who were all Kenites, were invited by Moses to go with the people of God into Canaan, they might retain this pastoral manner of life; not only as a badge of the nation from which they were descended, but as a means likewise to make their habitation more quiet and secure, in a land where they were strangers, both from the envy of the Jews at home, and from the danger of enemies abroad; for, having neither houses nor lands, but tents and cattle only, which they move upon occasion from

place to place, they could not be so subject to hostile invasion: but as in a course of time these Kenites were tempted by the more pleasant living of the Israelites, to think of changing this custom of their ancestors, this Jonadab the son of Rechab, a famous Kenite, and of much esteem and authority among them, took occasion to renew it again, and to bind his posterity to observe it. For which end he forbade the drinking of wine, lest the desire of so delicious a liquor might tempt them to plant vineyards and build houses as the Jews did. What authority he had to enforce these arbitrary injunctions, we cannot learn. It is plain, that he laid his posterity under no curse in case of disobedience. On the contrary, we find that our prophet was here directed by God to bring them to an apartment in the temple, to set wine before them, and invite them to drink, which would have been an unworthy action, if they had been under an indispensable obligation to abstain from it; and on the other hand the Rechabites refused it, not because their father laid them under any curse if they disobeyed him; but because he promised that they *should live many days in the land wherein they were strangers*, if they obeyed his voice, ver. 7. which promise being also made to those who *honoured their parents*, might the more incline them to that strict obedience for which they are so highly commended by God. Upon the whole, therefore, it appears, that Jonadab only renewed what his ancestors had observed long before he was born; and that his authority prevailed among his brethren to continue this form of abstinence for two hundred years after he was dead, rather as a civil custom than as a matter of religion. See Bishop Patrick and Bedford's Scripture Chronology, book vi. chap. 2. Instead of *house*, Houbigant reads, *family of the Rechabites*; and so ver. 3.

*Ver. 4. A man of God*] That is, a prophet. See 2 Kings, iv.

12 ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

13 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD.

14 The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.

15 I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

16 Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me:

17 Therefore, thus saith the LORD God of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.

18 ¶ And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you:

19 Therefore, thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

iv. 7. Instead of, *The chamber of the princes*, Houbigant reads, *The chamber of the singers*.

Ver. 19. *Jonadab—shall not want a man*] See chap. xxxiii. 17, 18. "When the main body of the Jewish nation are dispersed in their captivities, some of this family shall remain to attend on my service, and enjoy the privileges of worshipping in my temple at Jerusalem." The phrase *for ever* is often used in a restrained sense, as we have had frequent occasion to remark. A writer on this subject observes, that it hence appears of how great price in the sight of God is the virtue of filial duty and obedience. The law which enjoins it hath a promise of long life annexed thereto; and by this history of the Rechabites we may learn, that the surest way to entail a blessing on our children, and to perpetuate our names and families in a numerous and virtuous issue, is to reverence and obey our own parents. Worldly persons value themselves upon the nobility and greatness of their ancestors; but the servants of God set value on the virtue of their predecessors, and the piety of their descendants: so that all good parents are more solicitous to leave a good than a rich and powerful posterity, and to transmit true piety rather than great estates to their children; esteeming it more honourable to perpetuate virtue in their families, than wealth and grandeur; and the fear of God, rather than their own names and memories in a long and lasting succession of descendants. Yet even in this, God is often pleased to bless them: he seldom suffers the seed of the righteous to fail; his providence, for the most part, taking an especial care to continue the issue, as well as virtues, of those who have taken pains to propagate those virtues to their children and families. *Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.* This as-

urance of protection to him and his posterity was in a remarkable manner made good to this family, amid all the confusions and judgments which soon after fell upon the Jewish nation: for, as they had now found a place of refuge at Jerusalem from the danger of the Chaldean army; so afterwards, in the general desolation of that country, and the captivity of the people, it is certain these Rechabites were preserved, though we know not the particular manner of their deliverance. From history we learn, that there were great numbers of them in our Saviour's time: that they were the chief hearers and followers of Christ, the first and readiest to embrace the Gospel. They were then called, by way of distinction, **THE POOR**, from their professed poverty, Luke, vii. 22.; and **THE GOOD**, from their eminent piety, Rom. v. 7. They had changed their names indeed from Rechabites to Ebionites, Esseni, Chasidim or Assideans, which signify the same as *poor* and *good men*. But these new names,—not assumed by themselves, but given by others,—shew, that their virtue was the same, and continued as eminent and remarkable as ever. And as these were the first converts to Christianity, and in general received the Gospel, it is much to be noted, how this promise of God by his prophet, that *they should never want a man to stand before him*, was performed and made good to his family. It is indeed verified, both in a literal and spiritual sense; both in a worldly and in a heavenly meaning; the race being preserved until the time of Christ, and then incorporated with him as head of the church, and adopted into that faithful and obedient family, against which "the gates of hell shall never prevail, nor any period of time extinguish it." See Essay on the proper Lessons, vol. iv. p. 223.

## C H A P. XXXVI.

*Jeremiah causeth Baruch to write his prophesy, and publicly to read it. The princes, having intelligence thereof by Micaiah, send Jehudi to fetch the roll, and read it. They advise Baruch and Jeremiah to hide themselves. The king Jehoiakim, being certified thereof, heareth part of it, and burneth the roll. Jeremiah denounceth his judgment. Baruch writeth a new copy.*

[Before Christ 606.]

**A**ND it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of

Judah, *that* this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2 Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.

3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The Rechabites here mentioned were Kenites, of the posterity of Hobab, Moses's father-in-law, 1 Chron. ii. 55. Judg. i. 16. one family of which, denominated from Rechab their great progenitor, observed some peculiar rites, enjoined them by Jonadab, the son or lineal descendant of Rechab, a man famous for his piety in the days of Jehu, about three hundred years before this time, 2 Kings, x. 15, 16. See the critical notes.

1. The injunctions laid on them were, *to drink no wine, and dwell in tents*, having neither houses nor land, nor vineyard, nor tillage; but to devote themselves to a pastoral life, remote from the busy world where corruption and vice most abound, and thereby be farther removed from temptation: as they were *strangers in the land*, they must be content with their lot, and desire no great things; nor seek to accumulate wealth, which might provoke the envy of the people among whom they dwelt: luxury also, the bane of body and soul, would thus be banished from them; and, accustomed to hard fare, they would be the better able to meet the days of calamity, which the sins of the land where they sojourned were bringing upon them. *Note*; (1.) Though God hath not forbidden us wine, temperance will dictate caution and self-denial. (2.) It is desirable to sit loose to this present world; and the less we have in it, generally, the less unwilling we shall be to part from it. (3.) They who are strangers upon earth must never think of taking up their rest below, but be ready, at a moment's warning, to put off this tabernacle.

2. The Rechabites strictly observed Jonadab's rule. Men, women, and children, were all a family of Nazarites, in this respect; and though they were now obliged through necessity, by reason of the invasion, to dispense with one part of their father's injunctions, and had for safety retired to Jerusalem, yet it was not with an intention to take up their abode there longer than the danger threatened; and as for the other, they still religiously observed it; and therefore, though urged by the prophet to drink, who had invited them together into one of the chambers of the temple, and set before them pots of wine, they absolutely refused, and pleaded their father's order as the reason of their conduct. *Note*; When there is a spirit of real sobriety, the wine, even when it sparkles, will have no influence, nor the solicitations of others be able to extort a compliance with the least excess.

2dly, It was not the prophet's intention to draw the Rechabites into a breach of their rule, but to set them forth as an example to Israel.

1. The obedience of the Rechabites to their father served to aggravate the rebellion of the Jews against the commands of God. The commands of Jonadab, a mere man, were kept; the words of the eternal God disregarded: his injunctions, descending only by tradition, had more influence over his posterity, than God's written laws on the Jews, urged by a succession of prophets daily inculcating their observance. It was a real piece of self-denial which the sons of Rechab enjoined, in a matter before lawful; whereas what God had forbidden was highly criminal, and what he commanded would be their real comfort. The Rechabites had no particular obligation to Jonadab to enforce their obedience; whilst every thing that Israel possessed in Canaan came from God's bounty, and was held on condition of their fidelity; so that both gratitude and duty should have engaged them to observe God's commandments.

2. The Jews are threatened for their disobedience and base ingratitude. The Rechabites shall rise up in judgment and condemn them; and God will execute upon them all the threatenings that he hath pronounced, since they remained incorrigible, and would neither by admonitions nor corrections be warned, and led unto repentance. *Note*; Though vengeance is slow in coming, it is sure to all that abide impenitent.

3. The Rechabites are commended and rewarded for their dutiful obedience to their father Jonadab's commands. *Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.* As long as Israel was a nation, his posterity should continue in it; or perhaps to the end of time, the family, though now mixed with the Jews, should not be extinct; or it may have respect to better days, when they should be converted by the preaching of the Gospel, and, among other faithful souls, to the end of time *stand before the Lord*, to offer the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise. *Note*; Nothing entails more surely a blessing on children, than their dutiful observance of their pious parent's instructions.

## C H A P. XXXVI.

*Ver. 1. And it came to pass, &c.]* It is uncertain whether what is related in this chapter happened during the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, (for this city was besieged in the 4th year of Jehoiakim: see 2 Kings, xxiv. 1, 2.) or after the siege, when Jehoiakim was escaped from the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. One would imagine from what follows, particularly from ver. 9. that it happened at the

end

them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him upon a roll of a book.

5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD:

6 Therefore, go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD's house upon the fasting-day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.

7 It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people.

8 And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD's house.

9 And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem.

10 Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Sha-

phan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house, in the ears of all the people.

11 ¶ When Michaiah, the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD,

12 Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.

13 Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people.

14 Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them.

15 And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears.

16 Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid, both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words.

17 And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?

18 Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his

end of the fourth year; which would lead one to suppose that Nebuchadnezzar was retired. Jeremiah says nothing of the siege, and he orders Baruch to read his prophecies before an assembly of the people, who came to Jerusalem out of their cities, ver. 6. which denotes a time of joy, and a grand festival. See Calmet.

Ver. 3. *It may be, &c.*] These and other expressions of the like kind, sufficiently indicate that God's foreknowledge of future events lays no irresistible restraint on the will of man, nor takes away the liberty of human actions. Baruch was the most faithful disciple of our prophet: he served him as long as he lived in the capacity of his secretary, and never left him till his death.

Ver. 5. *I am shut up, &c.*] Not in prison; but in some place where the prophet had hidden himself, to avoid Jehoiakim. See ver. 26.

Ver. 9. *They proclaimed a fast*] It was customary among the Jews, to proclaim anniversary fasts upon certain days, in memory of some great calamity which had befallen them at that time. Of this kind were the fasts of the 4th, 5th, 7th, and 10th months, mentioned by the prophet Zechariah; the first instituted in memory of the city's being taken by Nebuchadnezzar; the second, in memory of the temple's being burned in that month; the third, for the murder of Gedaliah; and the fourth in memory of the siege which then began. See Lowth, and Zech. vii. 3. 5. viii. 19.

Ver. 10. *Scribe*] Chancellor or secretary.

Ver. 17, 18. *And they asked Baruch, &c.*] Mr. Green, on Pf. xiii. observes, that these words should be placed and pointed thus:—*How didst thou write all these words? From his mouth? And Baruch answered them, From his mouth.*



mouth, and I wrote *them* with ink in the book.

19 Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.

20 ¶ And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king.

21 So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king.

22 Now the king sat in the winter-house in the ninth month: and *there was a fire* on the hearth burning before him.

23 And it came to pass, *that* when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast *it* into the fire that *was* on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that *was* on the hearth.

24 Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, *neither* the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.

25 Nevertheless Elnathan, and Delaiah, and Gemariah, had made intercession to the king,

that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.

26 But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

27 ¶ Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, (after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah) saying,

28 Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned.

29 And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?

30 Therefore, thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

31 And I will punish him and his seed and

*mouth. He pronounced all these words unto me, and I wrote, &c.*

*Ver. 19. Go, hide thee]* "We cannot avoid giving the king information of what we have heard; but, as we know his violent temper, we advise you to abscond awhile, to avoid his fury." This example of the princes of Judah deserves remarking: they are careful to unite the duties which they owe to God, to justice, and humanity, with that which they are obliged to pay to their king. Calmet.

*Ver. 22. Now the king sat in the winter-house]* See Amos, iii. 15. This description of Jehoiakim's sitting in his winter-house in the 9th month, which corresponds to the latter end of November and part of December, with a fire burning upon the hearth before him, answers to Russell's account, who says, that the most delicate in those countries make no fires till the end of November. How long they continue the use of them, he does not say; but we know from other authors, that in Judæa they are continued far into the spring. Bishop Pococke set out from Jerusalem on the 17th of March in the evening, and was conducted by his Arab guide to his tent, which was two or three miles off; and there treated with bread and coffee; he, the Arab's wife, and some other people, he tells us, *sitting by a fire*: in another place he says, that in the night of the eighth of May, the sheik of Sephonry,

a place in Galilee, made them a fire in a little ruinous building, and *sent* them boiled eggs, milk, and coffee: so that the fire which they had was not designed for the preparing of their food, but for *warming* them. No wonder then that the people who went to Gethsemane, to apprehend our Lord, thought *a fire of coals* a considerable refreshment at the time of the passover, (John, xviii. 18.) which must have been earlier in the year than the 8th of May, though it might be considerably later than the 17th of March. See *Observations*, p. 19.

*Ver. 23. Three or four leaves]* Their books were in the form of a scroll, and consisted of several pieces of parchment rolled upon each other. It must be likewise noted, however, that by *leaves* several understand *columns* or *partitions*, into which the breadth of the parchment was divided. A variety of Hebrew manuscripts in the Bodleian library, as well as a curious one found at Herculaneum, are evidences for the reality of this manner of writing. Houbigant reads *pages*; which, says he, were the same with those now found in the parchments called "The volumes of the synagogue;" in which the parchments are not sewn one beneath the other; for if this was the case, the volume would only have one page, whose beginning would be at the top, and its end at the bottom of the parchment: but the parchments are sewn on the side of each other; which are read by unfolding the volume either

his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

32 ¶ Then took Jeremiah another roll, and

gave it to Baruch the scribe the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

either to the right or left; so that there are as many pages as there are parchments.

*Ver. 32. And there were added—many like words*] *Many words such as these.* Houbigant. I retain, says he, the ambiguity of the words in my version; כַּבְּיִמָּב *kabeimab*, signifies either *as are these*, which are immediately read, and shall be read: or *like to these*, that is to say, similar threats and prophecies concerning Jerusalem and its kings.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The date of this prophecy is the fourth year of Jehoiakim, probably about the same time that the transaction recorded in the former chapter happened.

1. Jeremiah is ordered to take a roll of a book, so called because they wrote on sheets of vellum or parchment, which they rolled one over the other. In this volume he must write all his sermons and prophecies, delivered during a course of two-and-twenty years, concerning Israel and Judah, and concerning all the nations; that the people might hear once more a repetition of all the warnings and admonitions so solemnly given them, as the most likely method to work upon their obdurate hearts, when they heard the evil threatened, and might be induced thereby to turn from the wickedness which they had committed; which if they did, notwithstanding all their provocations, God was still ready to pardon all that was past.

*Note;* (1.) We have abundant reason to bless God for causing his word to be written, and not left to uncertain tradition. (2.) Nothing can work upon the sinner's heart, if God's word does not. (3.) The certain ruin that sin will bring upon us should deter us from it. (4.) Whenever a sinner by grace returns to God, all his iniquity, however great and aggravated, shall be forgiven him.

2. Jeremiah instantly obeys, and employs Baruch as his amanuensis, perhaps as the readier scribe, and being himself *shut up*, either confined by the king's order or some indisposition from appearing at the temple. Baruch must take the roll, and read all the contents of it in the Lord's house, when the people were assembled together *on the fasting-day*, mentioned ver. 9. or on the great day of atonement, and also in the ears of all Judah, who came up out of their cities at the feast of tabernacles; or it may refer to the time when, on occasion of the fast, they assembled at the temple. *It may be they will present their supplication before the Lord*, affected with what they hear, and seek to him to avert the impending judgments; *and will return every one from his evil way*; turning to God ere the terrible threatenings pronounced take place; and Baruch failed not punctually to perform the prophet's orders. *Note;* (1.) Whenever the conscience is awakened by a sense of sin, it will appear by an immediate application to God in prayer. (2.) The formalities of religion

are often observed where the power of it is lost; but this only more fatally deceives sinners to their ruin.

2dly, Some have supposed that the fasting-day, ver. 6. was the same as is mentioned ver. 9. and that the time, between the date of Jeremiah's being commanded to write and this reading, was employed in finishing the roll; for, if the ninth month refers not to Jehoiakim's reign but to the ecclesiastical year, his fifth year beginning in the seventh month, this might be only two months after. Nor can it well be supposed, but that, if it had been read some months before, see ver. 1. 6. it would have come, ere this time, to the prince's ears; otherwise this was the second or third time of its being read, see ver. 6. line upon line and precept upon precept being needful for men so dull of hearing. We have,

1. An extraordinary fast proclaimed, on account, probably, of the threatened invasion, *to all the people of Judah and Jerusalem*; or, as the text seems to intimate, it was at their request *they proclaimed a fast, even all the people, &c.* *Note;* National fasts, without national reformation, will never turn away national judgments.

2. Baruch, on that solemn occasion, read out of the roll, at a window, or from a balcony, adjoining to Gemariah's chamber, in the audience of all the people who were in the court of the temple below.

3. Michaiah, the son of Gemariah, who seems to have been affected with what he heard, soon carried the report to the king's house, where the princes were assembled, who seemed to have left the concerns of religion to the people, and to have been themselves engaged in consultation. Startled at the contents of the discourse, he repeated them, and thereupon they desire Baruch to attend them and read over the words of the roll; with which he readily complied, not afraid of men's faces when God's word was to be delivered. *Note;* (1.) The discourse which has affected our own souls, may often be profitably repeated for the good of others. (2.) They who are the faithful ministers of Christ, must be ready to bear their testimony, if called thereto, even before kings, and not be ashamed.

4. The princes appear greatly struck with the words that Baruch read; terrified at the threatened judgments, *both one and other*, good and bad, or *a man to his friend*, amazed, and looking at one another, as if inquiring what was to be done in this case. Their general resolution was, to inform the king, to whose ill affections they were not strangers; and, therefore, those who were gracious men at least, justly apprehending that he would be exasperated, advised Baruch and Jeremiah to conceal themselves, lest in his anger he should murder them. But first, to gain the fullest satisfaction to themselves, and to answer the inquiries which the king might make, they demand how he wrote these discourses; and Baruch informs them, that

## C H A P. XXXVII.

*The Egyptians having raised the siege of the Chaldeans, king Zedekiah sendeth to Jeremiah to pray for the people. Jeremiah prophesieth the Chaldeans' certain return and victory: he is taken for a fugitive, beaten, and put in prison: he assureth Zedekiah of the captivity. Intreating for his liberty, he obtaineth some favour.*

[Before Christ 598.]

**A**ND king Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah.

2 But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words

that Jeremiah pronounced them, and he wrote from his mouth; which some regard as an idle question; but it seems to arise from a difficulty started, how Jeremiah could recollect so many discourses, containing such a variety of matter, the remembrance of which so exactly might give them a stronger conviction of the inspiration under which he spoke.

3dly, When Baruch departed to secrete himself, the princes went into the court to the king, to inform him of what had passed, having carefully laid up the roll in Elishama's chamber; and he, curious to hear in full what they summarily reported, immediately dispatched Jehudi for the roll, and bade him read it in his hearing, and before the princes who were with him. Whereupon he gave an account,

1. Of Jehoiakim's daring impiety. Two or three leaves were enough to enrage him, and, a fire being on the hearth before him, he cut the roll in pieces and burnt it; or Jehudi, who read it, did it at his command; he could not with patience hear such terrible denunciations: obstinate in his sins, he could not bear to be rebuked, but vented the enmity of his heart against God and his prophets, and hoped to disappoint the predictions, or prevent the knowledge of them from spreading among the people. *Note*; The despisers of God's word are among those who seem most surely given up to a reprobate mind.

2. The princes who were present testified no horror or detestation at this shocking sight: those who were in attendance on the king, not those who came up from Elishama's chamber, seem chiefly intended; at least were deterred from expressing any becoming zeal for fear of offending: three of them, however, with humility interceded with the king not to burn the roll; but he was as deaf to their intreaties as to the prophet's warnings. *Note*; They who silently sit by, without testifying their abhorrence of the sins which they see committed, are partakers in the guilt.

3. Not content with having cut to pieces and burnt the roll, the king in his fury would probably have served the authors no better if he could have seized them, for which he issues immediate orders; but the Lord hid them: whatever care they had taken to conceal themselves, it had been

of the LORD, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah.

3 And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maafeiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us.

4 Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison.

5 Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

ineffectual, if the special providence of God had not watched over them and rescued them from the malice of this impious king. *Note*; They who, for God's cause, boldly put their lives in their hand, are often wonderfully protected by him, and saved from the fury of their persecutors.

4. Jeremiah has a fresh order to write again the same words in another roll. The burning of the former can neither prevent the judgments approaching, nor destroy the word of God. Jehoiakim was enraged to be told that his country should be destroyed, and left desolate without man and beast; and, not believing it himself, would have others regard it as a falsehood; but it is a fact which will be shortly verified; and himself, his family, and servants, meet their deserved doom. He shall be slain with the Chaldean sword, and his corpse, ignominiously exposed, be refused burial, and left to rot a putrid carcase on the earth; his seed be cut off, that none of his posterity should ever sit on the throne of David; his son Jeconiah, in three months, being dragged into captivity, and in the above sense written childless: and all the evils threatened against Judah and Jerusalem terribly overtake them, according to the purport of the words written in the roll which was burnt. Another is provided, the same words dictated by Jeremiah, and written by Baruch, with the addition of many others like them. So that, instead of avoiding the divine judgments, Jehoiakim only added fresh aggravations to his guilt, and drew heavier vengeance on his head. *Note*; They who contend with God, and obstinately resist his counsel, only treasure up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath.

## C H A P. XXXVII.

*Ver. 1. Made king*] Zedekiah was but a tributary king, having taken an oath of homage to the king of Babylon. He was not so bad as many of his predecessors, though he was feeble, irresolute, and had but little credit and little religion.

*Ver. 5. Pharaoh's army was come forth*] Zedekiah, contrary to the oath that he had taken to Nebuchadnezzar, made an alliance with the king of Egypt, and contracted with him for assistance against the king of Babylon; accordingly

6 ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

7 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to enquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land.

8 And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire.

9 Thus saith the LORD; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart.

10 For though he had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained *but* wounded men among them, *yet* should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

11 ¶ And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army,

12 Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people.

13 And when he was in the gate of Ben-

jamin, a captain of the ward *was* there, whose name *was* Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans.

14 Then said Jeremiah, *It is false*; I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him: so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes.

15 Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison.

16 When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days;

17 Then Zedekiah the king sent; and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there *any* word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.

18 Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison.

19 Where *are* now your prophets which

Accordingly the king of Egypt sent an army to his relief, which obliged the Chaldeans to raise the siege of Jerusalem, in order to fight this Egyptian army. Calmet is of opinion, that the *Pharaoh* here mentioned was the *Apries* of Herodotus, called *Hophra* in Scripture. See ch. xlv. 30. Instead of *They departed*, we may read, *They were forced to depart*.

*Ver. 12. To separate himself, &c.]* That he might have there a possession for himself with the people. Houbigant; who understands this with the Chaldee as relating to the possession of Anathoth, which Jeremiah had purchased by the command of God. Others read it variously thus: *To withdraw himself from among the midst of the people;—or, thence to take rents among his people.*

*Ver. 13. Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans]* The ground of this accusation was, the prophet's having foretold that the Chaldeans should take the city, and exhorted the Jews to submit to them.

*Ver. 15. Wherefore the princes, &c.]* And the princes, &c.

*For they had made that the prison]* There is nothing extraordinary in making the dwelling-house of a great man a prison, according to either the ancient or modern manners of the east. See Gen. xxxix. 20. Even in the royal palace itself we find there was a prison; ch. xxxii. 2. Mr. Harmer (Obs. ch. viii. Obs. 37.) gives the following passage concerning eastern prisons, out of a manuscript of Sir

John Chardin. "The eastern prisons are not public buildings erected for that purpose, but a part of the house in which their criminal judges dwell. As the governor or provost of a town, or the captain of the watch, imprisonment such as are accused in their own houses, they set apart a canton of it for that purpose, when they are put into these offices, and choose for the jailor the most proper person they can find of their domestics."

*Ver. 16. When Jeremiah was entered, &c.]* But Jeremiah was brought into a deep and secret dungeon. Houbigant. From comparing this place with ch. xxxviii. 6. it seems likely that the *dungeon* was a deep pit, sunk perpendicularly like a well, in the middle of the open court or quadrangle, around which the great houses were built; and that in the sides of it, near the bottom, were scooped niches, like the cabins of a ship, for the separate lodgment of the unfortunate persons who were let down there. Hence also it may be, that the same word *בֵּר* *ber*, is frequently put for the *grave*; the ancient repositories of the dead being often constructed with niches in the same manner, in which the bodies were placed separately. Accordingly we read, Isai. xiv. 15. *But thou shalt be brought down to the grave, to the sides of the pit.* See the Hebrew.

*Ver. 19. Where are now your prophets]* "Where are now your false prophets? The event surely demonstrates how much they have deceived you. The siege is again re-

U "newed,

prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you nor against this land?

20 Therefore, hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there.

“newed, and the city in imminent danger of being taken.” Jeremiah does not abate any of his zeal and spirit on account of the confinement and persecution which he underwent.

*Ver. 21. A piece of bread out of the bakers' street*] Though among the easterns an oven was designed only to serve a single family, and to bake for them no more than the bread of one day, in ancient times;—a circumstance which ought to be recollected in order to enter into the force of Levit. xvi. 26. and which is a usage still continued in some places of the east;—yet it should seem that there were anciently, as there now are, some public bake-houses. Thus we read of the *bakers' street* in the passage before us; which might possibly be only a temporary regulation, to supply the wants of the soldiers, assembled from other places to defend Jerusalem, who might receive daily a proper quantity of bread from the royal bake-houses, as is the case at Algiers at this time, according to Dr. Shaw: besides some money, their soldiers, *who are unmarried*, receive each of them such a number of loaves every day: and if so, nothing could be more natural than for the king to order thence for Jeremiah a piece or a cake of bread every day, after the same manner. But be this as it may, Pitts informs us, that they have public bake-houses at Algiers for the people in common, the women *only preparing the dough at home*, and other persons making it their business to bake it, who send their boys for that purpose about the streets to give notice of being ready to receive the people's bread, and to carry it to the bake-houses; “Upon which the women within come and knock on the inside of the door; which the boy hearing, makes towards the house; then the women open the door a very little way, and, hiding their faces, deliver the cakes to him: which when baked he brings to the door again, and the women receive them in the same manner as they gave them.” He adds, that they bake their cakes thus every day, or every other day, and give the boy who brings the bread, a *piece or little cake*, for the baking, which the baker sells. According to this account then, small as the eastern loaves are, they break them it seems, and give a piece only to the baker, as a gratification for his trouble. This will illustrate Ezekiel's account of the false prophetesses receiving as gratuities *pieces of bread*; Ezek. xiii. 19. These are compensations still in use in the east, but compensations of the meanest kind, and for services of the lowest sort. See the *Observations*, p. 145.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, When Nebuchadnezzar had slain Jehoiakim, and taken away Coniah his son, that shadow of royalty, he placed on the throne of Zedekiah a younger son of Josiah.

21 Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

1. His ill conduct is remarked. He copied too closely after his evil predecessors; and, though he saw in them the fatal consequence of slighting the word of God, he took not warning; neither he nor his courtiers paying any regard to the calls and admonitions delivered by Jeremiah.

2. Though he neglected the prophet in his prosperity, when his distresses came upon him, he made application to him, earnestly intreating his prayers; for at that time the prophet enjoyed his liberty, and was not, as afterwards, shut up in prison. The Chaldeans, according to his prediction, had already begun the siege of Jerusalem; but, on hearing that an army of Egyptians were advancing to assist the Jews, though their king returned no more after his first defeat, 2 Kings, xxiv. 7. Nebuchadnezzar marched to give them battle. Zedekiah, therefore, begs the prophet to interest himself in their behalf, and pray the Lord to defeat the Chaldean army and prevent their return to Jerusalem. *Note; (r.)* Many, who despise God's ministers when in health and at their ease, are glad to fly to them and beg their prayers in the day of their calamity. (2.) Many also, like Zedekiah, are very earnest to be delivered from their sufferings, who have no heart to part with their sins.

3. Jeremiah answers not like a courtier; but, as a prophet, he tells them plainly, the Egyptians shall retreat or be defeated, the Chaldeans return to the siege, and never cease their attacks till they have taken the city and burnt it to the ground. Therefore the hopes which they entertained were groundless: they deceived themselves, when they thought that the Chaldeans would no more return, or not be able to succeed in their attempt; for, since God had decreed the fall of Jerusalem, though the Chaldeans had been smitten by them or their confederates, and none remained of their army but wounded men, such vigour would God put into them, that even they should rise up in their tents, whither they had been carried to be dressed, scale the walls, and burn the city with fire. *Note; (1.)* Sinners usually flatter themselves to their ruin, and easily believe the lie which their corrupted hearts wish to be true. (2.) All human help is vain when God is against us. (3.) When God hath work to do, he can make the weakest and most unlikely instruments effectual to accomplish his purposes.

2dly, Shortly after the message that he had delivered, foreseeing the impending evils, Jeremiah began to consult his own safety; and to this end,

1. He attempted to retire from Jerusalem into Benjamin, perhaps to Anathoth, or some place of safety, *to separate himself* from a people doomed to destruction, or to slip away thence in the midst of the people, which probably he thought

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*Jeremiah, by a false suggestion, is put into the dungeon of Malchiah. Ebed-melech, by suit, getteth him some enlargement. Upon secret conference he counselleth the king by yielding to save his life. By the king's instructions, he concealeth the conference from the princes.*

[Before Christ 589.]

**T**HEN Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying,

2 Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the

famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live.

3 Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.

4 Therefore the princes said unto the king, we beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

thought he might now do unperceived, when multitudes, who had flocked to Jerusalem on the invasion of the Chaldeans, were ready to take the opportunity of their departure, to return again into the country. *Note;* When we have no call from God to stay, it is prudent to hide ourselves from the evils that we foresee.

2. He is arrested as a deserter, and imprisoned. A captain, who kept ward at the gate of Benjamin, a descendant of Hananiah, probably the false prophet whose death Jeremiah had foretold, and who seems to have waited to do the prophet a mischief, seized him as he was passing through, and charged him with falling away to the Chaldeans; an accusation false and malicious, and which Jeremiah, with all the confidence of conscious innocence, denied; but in vain; he would not let him go, but drew him before the magistrates, too ready to receive any accusation against a man whom they hated: they condemn him in a passion, without hearing his defence, and, after beating him, committed him to prison, thrusting him into the dungeon, the worst and most dismal cell of that dark and melancholy abode, where he continued many days. *Note;* (1.) The purest characters are often blackened with the vilest aspersions; and the best friends of the state reviled and accused as the enemies and betrayers of the nation. (2.) When prejudice and passion sit in the chair of magistracy, no justice can be hoped for. (3.) Every lie, however improbable, is easily believed against a man obnoxious to their hatred for his piety and reproofs. (4.) It has been the lot of the best of men to suffer for conscience' sake. We need not be ashamed of a prison, when such as Jeremiah and Paul have gone thither before us.

3. When the Chaldean army returned, Zedekiah's fears drove him once more to seek the prophet's assistance: but being ashamed to have it known, he sent for him secretly from the miserable dungeon where he lay, and asked him if there was any word from the Lord? any new revelation made to him, or hope that the Chaldeans would raise the siege? And the prophet, not intimidated by all the rigours of a prison, nor fearing what might be the consequence of his fidelity, plainly tells him, there is not a word of comfort, but of despair; for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. And, seizing the moment when the king seemed affected with his message, he expostulates

with him on the cruelty and injustice of the treatment which he had suffered merely for delivering the word that he received from God, which the event had now verified; and upbraids him with the sin and folly of believing those false prophets who had flattered him and the people that the Chaldeans would no more return; when lo, their lies were now manifest to all men; and yet they were honoured and respected, while he was persecuted and perishing in a prison. *Note;* (1.) They who will not hearken to the voice of God's prophets, calling them to repentance, may in vain expect to hear from them messages of peace. (2.) They deserve to be upbraided with their folly who wilfully shut their eyes to their danger, and choose their own delusions. (3.) No danger will discourage those who know the value of God's regard; their life is no longer dear to them, when it must be exposed for their fidelity to him.

4. He prefers an earnest request to the king for his enlargement, who could not but be sensible of the injustice of his imprisonment: and such treatment as he had met with, must shortly, if continued, be his death. He begs therefore, with great humility, that at least he may not be remanded to Jonathan's house. *Note;* Though we must be ready to part with our lives when God calls, we are bound to use all prudent means for our preservation.

5. The king grants his request, yea, exceeds it. He dared not discharge him, through fear of the princes; but he brings him into the court of the prison, where he was more at liberty, and enjoyed the air; and gave orders, notwithstanding the scarcity of provisions, that every day, whilst any bread remained, he should have a loaf for his subsistence. Thus his imprisonment really became his mercy; and he was protected both from the famine and the sword, to which those who were at large in the city were exposed. *Note;* God can make the events which appeared most afflictive turn out to us the most substantial blessings.

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*Ver. 2. He shall have his life for a prey.* As a spoil gained from the enemy; snatched out of the flames, and saved from the carnage. The beginning of the next verse should be rendered, *For thus saith the Lord;* which keeps up the connection.

5 Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you.

6 Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

7 ¶ Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin;

8 Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying,

9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city.

10 Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.

11 So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

12 And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine arm-holes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.

13 So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

14 ¶ Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that is in the house of the LORD: and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me.

15 Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?

16 So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the LORD liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life.

*Ver. 5. For the king is not he, &c.] Nor is it proper for the king to deny you any thing. Houbigant. Nothing can give a higher idea of the weakness and pusillanimity of Zedekiah than this passage.*

*Ver. 6. Then took they Jeremiah] It is commonly thought that Jeremiah, during his abode in this loathsome place, composed the melancholy meditations inserted in the third chapter of his Lamentations. See ver. 53. and 55. Josephus asserts, that he sunk up to his neck in the mire; and adds, that their intention in putting him into so noisome a place was, that he might perish in it. See Antiq. lib. ix. cap. 10. and Calmet. This account of the dungeon accords with what was mentioned in the note on ch. xxxvii. 16. For if the dungeon was in the open court, and left open like a well at top, there being no other way of giving it air and light, the falling of rain mixing with the earth below would occasion mud in a place where the sun's rays could not reach to dry up the moisture.*

*Ver. 7. Ebed-melech, &c.] Ebed-melech the Cushite, &c. It may be supposed, that God intended to give some distant hints of his justice in calling the Gentiles to embrace the gospel; for this Ethiopian or Cushite preserves the prophet, whom the Jews would have destroyed; and again the Gentiles believed in Christ, whereas the Jews crucified him. The Lord, who put these sentiments of compassion for Jeremiah into the heart of this officer, afterwards*

recompensed him, by delivering him from death at the siege of Jerusalem. See chap. xxxix., 15, 16., and Calmet.

*Ver. 9. And he is like to die for hunger, &c.] Particularly when he would have died by hunger where he was, if bread was wanting in the city. As much as to say, "There was no need for those who desired his death to put him into so filthy and loathsome a place;" since, if he had continued in the court of the prison, he must have died through the famine which threatens the city, if there were no bread. See Houbigant.*

*Ver. 15. If I declare it unto thee, &c.] The prophet had so often experienced the unsteadiness of the king's temper, his backwardness to follow good counsel, and his want of courage to support those who dared to give him proper advice, that he might very reasonably determine not to venture his life to serve a man who was in some measure incapable of being directed: and, although God had shewn the prophet what would be the effect of this advice if it were followed, yet it does not appear that he had commanded him to make it known to Zedekiah. See Lowth. Instead of *Wilt thou not hearken?* Houbigant reads, *Thou wilt not bearken.**

*Ver. 16. That made us this soul] Who hath given us this time to breathe; that is to say, "this intermission from the siege, by the absence of the Chaldeans."*

*Ver.*



17 Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house:

18 But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.

19 And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me.

20 But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live.

21 But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the LORD hath shewed me:

22 And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say, Thy friends have

set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, and they are turned away back.

23 So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.

24 ¶ Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die.

25 But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee:

26 Then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there.

27 Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived.

*Ver. 17. If thou wilt assuredly go forth] Nebuchadrezzar was not in person at the siege of Jerusalem. He was at Riblah in Syria, chap. xxxix. 5, 6. His army was commanded by his generals; it is to these generals or princes that Jeremiah counsels Zedekiah to return, and to submit himself to the king, by whom he had been established on the throne.*

*Ver. 22. And, behold, all the women, &c.] Behold, all the women who are left in the king of Judah's house, go forth to the king of Babylon's princes: lo, they say of thee, His friends deceive and delude him, they have placed his feet in the mire, and have turned away from him; ver. 23. Lo, all thy wives and thy children shall go forth to the Chaldeans, neither shalt thou escape their hands; for thou shalt be taken by the king of Babylon, and this city shall be burned with fire. Jeremiah in the 21st verse says, This is the word which the Lord hath shewed me; namely, what follows in the two next verses; in the first of which he speaks of what passed before his eyes in the present tense; and in the 23d, explaining what he had seen, he speaks in the future. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 27. He told them according to all these words] Jeremiah evidently had besought the king not to suffer his being remanded to his former prison, and had thanked him for the favour he had shewn him in drawing him thence; for otherwise, how could he have truly told them*

that he had made his remonstrances, as in verse 26. *I presented my supplication, &c.* It is certainly allowable, in various cases, not to tell all one knows, and to conceal the truth; but it is not permitted to speak falsely, or to intermix falsehood with truth, or to deny one part of the truth by affirming another part, on any occasion. All this is an offence against veracity, and cannot be excused. See Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jeremiah's troubles are not yet ended. We have,

1. A fresh accusation brought against him by the princes. Though he was a prisoner, many came to him, whom he failed not faithfully to admonish of the determined destruction of Jerusalem, and to counsel them, as the only way of securing their lives, to cast themselves on the mercy of the Chaldeans, who would certainly spare all that surrendered; while those who persisted in a fruitless defence would miserably perish by famine, pestilence, and the sword. Such discourse the princes regarded as highly treasonable, tending to weaken the hands of the people, and betray the city: fain, therefore, would they have the king put him to death as a public enemy, who sought not the welfare of the people, but their hurt. *Note;* (1.) It is a mercy, in times of calamity, if but our lives be given us

28 So Jeremiah abode in the court of taken: and he was *there* when Jerufalem was the prifon until the day that Jerufalem was taken.

for a prey. (2.) The enemies of God's faithful minifters often paint them as traitors and troublers of the ftate, when, in truth, all their warnings and advice are defigned purely for the lengthening of the nation's profperity.

2. Jeremiah is, by the king's permiffion, put into the dungeon. Unable to refit the authority of the princes in the prefent diftracted ftate of things, or willing to gratify them, though at the expence of facrificing a man whom he knew to be innocent, and a prophet of the Lord, he is given up to their hands, and from them he muft expect no mercy. They drag the prophet from the court of the prifon unto another, over which Malchiah prefided; and, intending fecretly to deftroy him, which they dared not publicly do, they let him down with cords into a deep and noifome dungeon, where was *no water, but mire*, into which he funk, fays Jofephus, up to the neck; and there left him, not doubting but hunger, cold, the damp and the loathfomenefs of the place, would foon put an end to his life; and then he would appear to have died a natural death. Here he is fuppofed to have offered the prayer recorded, Lam. iii. 55—57.

3. God yet remembers him, and raifes him up a friend at court, when his cafe appeared desperate. Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian by birth, but poffeffed of more humanity and piety than any native Ifraelite; a great man in office, yet a good man in the worft of times and moft corrupted court; not afhamed to own the fuflering caufe of God and truth, he no fooner heard of the prophet's miferable fituation, than he immediately fought the king, who was now fitting in the gate of Benjamin, hearing caufes, or holding fome council of war or ftate; and boldly, in the prefence of all his nobles, and many of the princes who were probably the authors of Jeremiah's fuffering, charges them with a moft unjuft and cruel procedure, and that the confequence muft neceffarily be the prophet's death, famifhed with hunger, unlefs fpeedily relieved. *Note*; Zeal for God makes men bold as lions.

4. Zedekiah gives Ebed-melech orders immediately to draw the prophet from his dungeon, and a guard of foldiers to affift him, if any dared attempt to oppofe his releafe; and, with the greateft humanity and tendernels, he took care to bring fome foft rags to put under Jeremiah's arms, that the cords which drew him up might not hurt him: and now, once more brought forth from the dark and difmal pit, he is re-conveyed to *the court of the prifon*. Probably Ebed-melech thought that fafer for the prophet than his difcharge, as he would be there fheltered from danger, and fed from the king's ftores. *Note*; (1.) When we dare be faithful, we fhall frequently find more favour than we expected. (2.) The leaft circumftances which befpeak the tendernels and humanity of a charitable heart, fhall be remembered and recompens'd at the refurrexion of the juft.

2dly, Severe ftuggles, no doubt, paffed in the bofom of this unhappy monarch, halting between two opinions, divided between the fear of man and the fear of God, and perplexed with the warnings of confcience and the ftirivings of corruption.

1. He feeks another interview with the prophet; appoints the place of meeting, for fecrefy probably, at *the third entry* or gate, as it is fuppofed, of the afcent which went up from the king's houfe to the temple; and, having ordered the prophet thither, he came to him, earnestly adjuring him to tell him if he had any farther *word* from the Lord; in hopes, perhaps, that there might be fome comfort yet in ftore for him. Vain expectation! while his heart continued impenitent and unhumbl'd.

2. Before he answers the king's queftion, he begs a folemn affurance from him, that he will not put him to death for fpeaking the truth; and, what was as much his concern as his own prefervation, that he would follow the advice he gave him. *Note*; (1.) Readinefs to die in the caufe of truth is not at all inconftit with every prudent precaution to prefere our lives. (2.) True minifters have the moft earneft folicitude, that finners fhould hear and comply with the advice on which their life, their eternal life, depends.

3. The king folemnly fwears to fave him harmlefs; *as the Lord liveth, that made us this foul*, may he take my life, if ever I attempt to deftroy thee. He will not himfelf put him to death, nor fuffer the princes to hurt him. As to obeying the advice, he is filent, defigning to follow it only fo far as it pleafed him.

4. Jeremiah fairly fetts before him the only ftap which yet remained to be taken, in order to prefere himfelf and the city. By an immediate furrender, and cafting himfelf on the clemency of the king of Babylon, the city fhould be prefere from ruin, himfelf be permitted to live in peace, if not in fplendor, and his family be prefere: but, if he refused, there was no hope; the Chaldeans would infallibly force their way into the city, and burn it with fire; and, though he might attempt to efcape, he fhould certainly be feized. *Note*; There is but one way in which finners can be fave, and that is by an entire fubmiffion to the righteoufnefs of God, and cafting their fouls on the mercy of God revealed in the gofpel. They who refufe to do this muft perifh.

5. Zedekiah hesitates, and fuggests his fears of the ignominy to which he fhould be expofed, if the Chaldeans delivered him up to the Jews that had fallen to them, who would now treat him with contempt, or revenge themfelves on him for the threatenings that he had uttered againft them for deferting him: fears in themfelves indeed groundlefs, and efpecially when, in obedience to a divine command, he caft himfelf on the Lord's protection. *Note*; (1.) When our foolifh reafoning is heard, in oppofition to God's word, we are fure to act wrong. (2.) For fear of being laughed at, many dare not feek to be faved. (3.) Many terrify themfelves with groundlefs apprehenfions of danger, when the path of duty is the only path of fafety.

6. Jeremiah fiftences the objection, with an affurance that his fears were without foundation. *They fhall not deliver thee up, but treat thee with refpect and kindnefs: it fhall be well unto thee, and thy foul fhall live*. But, as each moment of delay was dangerous, he urges him to an immediate compliance with *the voice of the Lord*; otherwife, the reproach

## C H A P. XXXIX.

*Jerusalem is taken. Zedekiah is made blind, and sent to Babylon. The city ruined. The people made captive. Nebuchadrezzar's charge for the good usage of Jeremiah. God's promise to Ebed-melech.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**I**N the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, against Jerusalem, and they besieged it.

2 And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up.

3 And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergal-sharezzer, Samgar-nebo, Sarfchim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezzer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon.

reproach that he feared would come more bitterly upon him from his own house, who would upbraid his folly for hearkening to the false prophets, those pretended friends, but real enemies, to his peace, when he might have prevented their ruin and his own by hearkening to Jeremiah: for the city shall be taken, his wives and children dragged forth to the tents of the Chaldeans, himself unable to escape, and made prisoner by the king of Babylon; and he will cause Jerusalem to be burnt with fire through his folly and obstinacy. *Note;* (1.) They who seek by sin to avoid shame, will but expose themselves more bitterly to the reproach which they desire to shun. (2.) Wicked rulers are chargeable with all the evils that they bring upon their unhappy subjects.

7. They part hereupon; Zedekiah not being persuaded to yield to his advice, and, for the sake of his reputation, willing to keep the subject of this conference a secret from the princes, who would probably hear of it, and be curious to know what passed: he therefore confirms his promise of protecting him, if he concealed the conversation; but charges him not to divulge to them any thing that he said, except his request not to be sent back again to Jonathan's house, to die there; which request, no doubt, the prophet had made: and when the princes came to Jeremiah, with this he easily put them off, and thus abode in safety in the court of the prison till Jerusalem was taken. *Note;* (1.) Many testify greater concern for their worldly reputation than for their salvation. (2.) We are not always obliged to tell all that we know to every impertinent inquirer. Though we must never utter an untruth, we may safely conceal what others have no right to know, and it would be dangerous to ourselves to discover. The wisdom of the serpent is commendable, when joined to the harmlessness of the dove.

4 ¶ And it came to pass, that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain.

5 But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him.

6 Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah.

7 Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon.

## C H A P. XXXIX.

THIS chapter begins with an account of the taking of Jerusalem, and relates the flight of Zedekiah, and the particulars of his punishment, after that he was taken and brought before the king of Babylon; and also the burning of the city, and removal of the people, a few of the poorest only excepted, to Babylon, v. 1—10. Jeremiah is released, and kindly treated in consequence of a special charge from Nebuchadrezzar, v. 11—14.

*Ver. 3. The princes—came in, and sat in the middle gate.]* The gate between the wall which encompassed the city, and that which inclosed the temple. It was customary among the Chaldeans to give the names of their idols, as an additional title or mark of honour to persons of distinction. We may render the names thus: *Nergal-Sharezzer, keeper of the temple of Nebo; Sarfchim, prince of the eunuchs; Nergal-Sharezzer, prince of the Magi, &c.*

*Ver. 4. By the gate betwixt the two walls.]* That is, betwixt the wall and the outworks, or betwixt the old wall of the city and the new one which was built by Hezekiah. See 2 Chron. xxxii. 5. and Ezek. xii. 4, &c.

*Ver. 5. To Riblah in the land of Hamath.]* Most interpreters suppose this city to be the same which was called Antioch in after-times, when it was taken by Seleucus: in this sense the Jerusalem Targum upon Numb. xxxiv. understands the words. See Lowth and Calmet.

*Ver. 7. He put out Zedekiah's eyes.]* See chap. lli. 11. where it is added, that he put him in prison till the day of his death. Thus two prophecies were fulfilled, which seemed at first hearing to contradict each other: the first, that of our prophet, ch. xxxii. 4. that *Zedekiah's eyes should behold the eyes of the king of Babylon;* and the other, that of Ezekiel, that he should not see Babylon, though he should die there, chap. xii. 13. The Jews to this day keep a

8 And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.

9 Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained.

10 But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

11 ¶ Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying,

12 Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.

13 So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushasban, Rab-saris, and

Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, and all the king of Babylon's princes;

14 Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people.

15 ¶ Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

16 Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good: and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee.

17 But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid.

18 For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

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solemn fast in memory of this misfortune of Zedekiah. See Calmet.

*Ver. 11. Now Nebuchadrezzar—gave charge, &c.]* Nebuchadrezzar had evidently been informed of the advice which Jeremiah had given both to king and people; and which, if it had been hearkened to, would have prevented the charge and labour of so long a siege, and the bloodshed which attended it. The king did not give these orders till some time after the taking of the city; for it appears that Jeremiah was carried with the rest of the captives as far as Ramah. See the first verse of the next chapter.

*Ver. 13. Nebushasban, &c.]* Nebushasban, prime minister, or prince of the eunuchs, and Nergal-Sharezzer, prince of the Magi.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, At last the threatened judgment is executed. Vengeance against sinners, though slow, is sure.

1. The devoted city is taken by storm, after sustaining a siege of eighteen months, begun by the king of Babylon in person, in the midst of winter, and carried on with implacable resentment by his orders for Zedekiah's perfidy, Nebuchadnezzar himself having retired to Riblah, but on what account is uncertain. The names of the princes who took possession of the middle gate are recorded, with their several offices. These, with their companions, sat in the gate in triumph as victors, or to secure the entrance for their troops, till the city was thoroughly possessed; and thus was fulfilled the prophecy, chap. i. 15.

2. Zedekiah is seized. Under covert of the night, in

which the assault was made, when he found the city taken, he attempted to make his escape, and had got as far as the plains of Jericho; but his enemies, being apprized of his flight, quickly pursued and overtook him, and brought him prisoner to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, where sentence, grievous as death, is pronounced upon him: his infant children are murdered before his eyes, the nobles of Judah slain; and then, as if to leave him all his miserable days to reflect on this horrid spectacle, the last objects he ever should behold, his eyes are put out, and, bound in fetters of brass, he is led a wretched captive to Babylon, 2 Kings, xxv. 4—7. *Note;* (1.) There is no flying from God. (2.) They who will not believe the warnings of God must, in their sufferings, be convinced of the truths which they despised.

3. Shortly after this the city and temple were burnt, the walls razed, the people carried away captives, and none left but the poor to till the ground and cultivate the vineyards, from whom the Chaldeans had nothing to fear, and who were probably put under a heavy tribute. And this was a strange alteration, and a just retaliation upon the cruel masters who had so enslaved their brethren; themselves are now captives, while their poor and oppressed servants are made proprietors of their estates. So surely will it appear, sooner or later, that there is a righteous God who judgeth the earth.

2dly, They who entrust their all with God, shall never have cause to regret the confidence they repose in him. We have,

1. The

## C H A P. XL.

*Jeremiah, being set free by Nebuzar-adan, goeth to Gedaliah. The dispersed Jews repair unto him. Johanan, revealing Ishmael's conspiracy, is not believed.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**T**HE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon.

2 And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.

3 Now the LORD hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you.

4 And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go.

5 Now while he was not yet gone back, he

said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go.

6 Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

7 ¶ Now when all the captains of the forces which were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon;

8 Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jefaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

9 And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans:

1. The great care taken of Jeremiah, as God had promised him, chap. xv. 11. \*Even the king of Babylon, who, no doubt, had heard the prophecies that he had delivered, the advice which he had given, and his sufferings on that account, interests himself for him, and charges Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, either before the city was taken, or immediately thereupon, to use Jeremiah with particular kindness; release him from his confinement, and not only save him from harm, but do for him whatever he should request; which orders he obeyed, as more fully appears in the next chapter. *Note;* (1.) They who suffer in our cause are entitled to a suitable recompence. (2.) Infidels and idolaters have often shewn more regard to God's servants than faithless professors.

2. Ebed-melech's kindness to the prophet is remembered and rewarded. By an express revelation from God, he is assured, that though he should see the calamities pronounced on the people executed, himself should survive them; and, however much he feared for his safety, God will surely deliver him from the sword of the Chaldeans, and give him *his life for a prey*, when all seemed devoted

to death; and this *because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord.* *Note;* (1.) Good men may have their fears in the day of danger. But, (2.) They who trust in God shall never be confounded.

## C H A P. XL.

THE five following chapters contain a particular account of what passed in the land of Judah from the taking of Jerusalem to the retreat of the people into Egypt; and the prophecies of Jeremiah concerning them there.

*Ver. 1. The word, &c.]* Some understand *the word* here in the sense of *matter or thing;—that which happened to Jeremiah from Jehovah, &c.*

*Ver. 5. Now while he was not yet gone back, &c.]* But if *this also doth not please thee, go to Gedaliah, &c.* Houbigant. There are many other versions given of this passage; but this of Houbigant, which agrees with the Chaldee, appears the best.

*Ver. 9. Sware unto them]* That is, assured and promised them by an oath, that they should be safe under the protection and government of the Chaldeans.

X

*Ver.*

dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.

10 As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer-fruits, and oil, and put *them* in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken.

11 Likewise when all the Jews that *were* in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that *were* in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan;

12 Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer-fruits very much.

13 ¶ Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah,

14 And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not.

15 Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know *it*: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish?

16 But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing; for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

*Ver. 10. I will dwell at Mizpah, &c.]* "I will keep my residence here, to be ready to obey any orders which the king of Babylon sends me by his servants."

*Ver. 14. Baalis, the king of the Ammonites]* The king of the Ammonites had concerted this matter with Ishmael, with a design to make the Jews, who still remained in their own country, his vassals. See chap. xli. 10. It appears, that Gedaliah, though a man of great honesty and goodness, was too credulous. Grotius compares him to Eumenes. He received Ishmael to his house and table with far too little circumspection. See Calmet.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, The chapter begins with, *The word which came to Jeremiah*; not that this chapter contains any prophecy, but it is a general title to this and most of the chapters which follow.

The rendezvous of the captives, it seems, was appointed to be at Ramah, about seven miles from Jerusalem. Thither, among others, Jeremiah was led, chained with the rest, probably through mistake of some inferior officer, who, after he had been discharged, chap. xxxiv. 14. finding him at large, and not knowing the exemption granted him, joined him with his countrymen. But Nebuzar-adan, on the review of the captives, immediately discovered, unbound, and discharged him, with the greatest respect and kindness.

1. Nebuzar-adan, though a heathen, could not but acknowledge the truth of Jeremiah's mission and prophecies, now so exactly fulfilled; and, to the shame of those who rejected his warning, addresses the captives, reminding them of their sins and disobedience to the prophet's voice, which had provoked God's wrath, and brought this righteous judgment upon them.

2. He gives him his choice: either to go to Babylon with him, and be treated with all kindness, and provided

for to his heart's wish; or, if he would rather stay in his native country, he was at full liberty to choose his abode, and perhaps to take possession of what estate in the country he pleased, the whole being at the disposal of the conquerors. *Note;* They who sacrifice all for God, even in this life, are often found no losers by their fidelity to him.

3. Jeremiah appearing, it should seem, irresolute where to fix, Nebuzar-adan advised him to join Gedaliah, a prince of Judah, who seems early to have followed the prophet's advice, and fallen to the Chaldeans, and now as a reward was made governor of the land: yet he would not prescribe to him, but left the matter to his own consideration, having supplied him with victuals, which, in the exhausted state of the country, were necessary for his present subsistence, and made him a handsome present besides; a noble instance of generosity in a heathen officer towards a holy prophet. With his advice Jeremiah complied, and joined Gedaliah at Mizpah, rather choosing to sustain the hardships that he might be exposed to in God's heritage, among his poor people, than dwell in affluence in the land of the heathen.

2dly, A sudden gleam of unexpected prosperity prepares only for the last stroke, which should ruin the miserable remnant which was left.

1. Under Gedaliah's government, notwithstanding the late desolations, things seemed to wear a promising aspect. The captains of the forces, who had not been able to throw themselves into the city during the siege, and had lurked in some retreat; or rather had escaped with the shattered remains of the soldiery, when Zedekiah was taken, came to Gedaliah at Mizpah; and as he had, it seems, full power left him from the king of Babylon to receive all who quietly submitted, he gave them a solemn oath of protection on condition of their fidelity, and assures them,

## C H A P. XLI.

*Ishmael, treacherously killing Gedaliah and others, purposeth with the residue to flee unto the Ammonites. Johanan recovereth the captives, and mindeth to flee into Egypt.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**N**OW it came to pass in the seventh month, *that* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah.

2 Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.

them, that their fears were groundless, of being delivered up to the Chaldeans because they had been in arms against them; but if they now lived peaceably, they might live comfortably. He himself would reside at Mizpah, and transact all the matters of tribute to be paid the Chaldeans, or to stand before them, to intercede for them if any inquiry was made after them; to convey to them any orders, and render homage on their behalf; while they had nothing to do but to occupy the land, to gather the vintage, the summer fruits, and oil, lay up their winter's store, and enjoy the plenty which God had once more restored to them. The rumour of this peaceable re-establishment of the government, under so good a man as Gedaliah, soon reached the neighbouring nations, and drew a vast concourse of Jews, who had taken refuge there, to return and submit to the Chaldean government; so that the country was again replenished with inhabitants, and they gathered wine and summer-fruits very much. Thus once more they began to taste God's goodness, if that at last might lead them to repentance.

2. A dark scheme appears framed to interrupt and destroy this short-lived prosperity. Johanan, one of the captains who had returned, got intelligence of a plot contrived by Baalis king of the Ammonites, the hereditary enemy of the Jews, and to be executed by Ishmael, who had undertaken to dispatch Gedaliah, envious probably at his advancement, and thinking himself, as of the seed royal, more fit to rule. Of this Johanan informed the governor; and, to prevent the threatened mischief, offered privately to dispatch Ishmael; Gedaliah, however, being a man of integrity himself, would not entertain a suspicion of Ishmael as capable of so base a deed, but rejects the intelligence as false, and forbids him to proceed a step farther in the affair. *Note;* (1.) Love hopeth all things, thinketh no evil; and they who are conscious of their own simplicity are ready to believe others guileless as themselves. (2.) No obligations can bind the swellings of ambition; men of that character would mount the throne over the

3 Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, *even* with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, *and* the men of war.

4 And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it,

5 That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, *even* fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring *them* to the house of the LORD.

6 And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam.

7 And it was so, when they came into

corpses of those to whom they are even indebted for the very power of destroying them. (3.) It would be highly dangerous to kill by way of prevention; in such a case, no man's life would be safe from a malicious tongue. (4.) Though it be sinful to be suspicious, yet, when advertised of our danger, it is wise to be on our guard.

## C H A P. XLI.

*Ver. 1. In the seventh month]* Answering partly to our September, and partly to October, two months after the taking of Jerusalem. The murder of Gedaliah gave occasion to the fast of the seventh month, which the Jews observed after their return from the captivity. See Zech. vii. 5. viii. 19. Ishmael was of the family of David.

*Ver. 5. Having their beards shaven, &c.]* These were tokens of great mourning, by which they expressed their grief for the destruction of their city and temple: such expressions of sorrow were forbidden to be used at funeral obsequies (see Levit. xix. 27, 28.), but might be lawfully used upon other mournful occasions. See Isai. xv. 2. Some suppose, that these devout persons brought their oblations to the place where the altar formerly stood, which they looked upon as consecrated ground; a custom which they think countenanced by the words of Baruch, ch. i. 10. where the exiles of Babylon are supposed to send money to buy offerings for the altar of the Lord, after Jerusalem was taken and burnt. Compare ver. 2. Others understand the house of the Lord, of an altar or place of worship erected by Gedaliah at Mizpah, in imitation of that which was formerly set up there by Samuel, 1 Sam. vii. 7—9. which place continued to be a *proseucha* or place of worship in after-times, as appears from 1 Macc. iii. 46. There were many such sanctuaries or places of worship both in Judæa and elsewhere among the Jewish dispersions. See Lowth and Calmet. Ishmael went weeping along with them, as if he sympathised in their affliction, ver. 6. He appears to have been a thorough-paced hypocrite.

*Ver. 7. Slew them, and cast them into the midst of the pit]*



the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, *and cast them* into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that *were* with him.

8 But ten men were found among them, that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbore, and slew them not among their brethren.

9 Now the pit wherein Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men, whom he had slain because of Gedaliah, *was* it which Afa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel: *and* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with *them that were* slain.

10 Then Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people that *were* in Mizpah, *even* the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

11 ¶ But when Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done,

12 Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that *are* in Gibeon.

13 Now it came to pass, *that* when all the people which *were* with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, then they were glad.

14 So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah.

15 But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites.

16 Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after *that* he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, *even* mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon:

17 And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt,

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This *pit* was the cavern or ditch which Afa cast up against the walls of Mizpah, when he rebuilt and fortified it against the attempts of Baasha; see ver. 9. Houbigant renders it, *Slew them at the midst of the pit.*

Ver. 8. *We have treasures in the field*] Dr. Shaw tells us that in Barbary, when the grain is winnowed, they lodge it in *mattamores* or *subterraneous repositories*; two or three hundred of which are sometimes close to each other, the smallest holding four hundred bushels. These are very common in other parts of the East, and are in particular mentioned by Dr. Ruffel, as being in great numbers near Aleppo, about the villages; which renders travelling there in the night very dangerous, the entrance into them being often left open, when they are empty. The like method, it should seem, of keeping corn, obtains in the Holy Land; for Le Bruyn speaks of deep pits at Ramah, which he was told were designed for corn; and Rauwolf talks of three very large vaults at Joppa, actually used for the laying up of grain, when he was there. *The treasures in the field of wheat, &c.* which the ten men here proposed to Ishmael as the ransom for their lives, were doubtless laid up in the same kind of repositories. Dr. Shaw only speaks of the Arabs hiding corn in these *mattamores*. But as these ten Jews mentioned their having *honey* and *oil* in these repositories,

so the author of the history of the piratical states of Barbary tells us, that it is usual with the Arabs, when they expect the armies of Algiers, to secure their corn, and other effects which are not portable, in subterraneous repositories, wandering about with their flocks till the troops are returned to their quarters. See the *Observations*, p. 420.

Ver. 9. *Now the pit, &c.*] בור *bor*, signifies a basin, cistern, or reservoir; a large pit for receiving rain water, which Afa, who built and fortified Mizpah at the time he was at war with Baasha king of Israel (1 Kings, xv. 22.) caused to be made in the midst of the city, in order that the people might not be in want of so necessary an article in case of a siege. Reservoirs of this kind were much in use in Palestine, as Jerome tells us in his commentary upon Amos, iv. 7, 8. And Josephus testifies the advantage of them to the besieged, when he tells us, that when Masada was reduced to the greatest distress for want of water, it was relieved by a fall of rain in the night, which filled all the reservoirs. Ant. lib. xiv. cap. 14. edit. Hudson. Each private family seems also to have had one of these pits or reservoirs for its own use: "Drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;" בורו *boro*, "his pit," or "reservoir," says Rabshakeh to the people of Jerusalem, Isai. xxxvi. 16.

18 Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.

## C H A P. XLII.

*Johanan desireth Jeremiah to inquire of God, promising obedience to his will. Jeremiah assureth him of safety in Judea, and destruction in Egypt: he reproveth their hypocrisy, in requiring of the Lord that which they meant not to follow.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**T**HEN all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and

Jezeiah the son of Hofhaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near,

2 And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, *even* for all this remnant; (for we are left *but* a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:)

3 That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.

4 Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto

*Ver. 17. In the habitation of Chimham]* The parcel of ground, in the general opinion of interpreters, which David had settled upon Chimham, the son of Barzillai. The passage may be rendered, *And they went and dwelt in Geruth Chimham, which is near Bethlehem, in order to proceed to go into Egypt, out of the reach of the Chaldeans, &c.*

REFLECTIONS. — 1st, A scene of more complicated villany and unprovoked barbarity can hardly be found than is here recorded.

1. Gedaliah is assassinated. Unsuspecting of Ishmael, and the princes with him, who came with a pretence of paying a visit of friendship, he kindly and generously entertained them; when, at a signal given, Ishmael, and the rest of the conspirators, suddenly rose on Gedaliah and slew him; nor sheathed their swords till they had, in cold blood, massacred all the men, both Jews and Chaldeans, who were in Mizpah. And to this they seem to have been instigated by their revenge, because Gedaliah and the Jews had fallen to the Chaldeans; or by their envy, because Ishmael, of the seed royal, and the princes, could not bear to see Gedaliah preferred before them. Such horrid work do the satanical tempers of fallen sinners make, when left without restraint.

2. Not content with all the blood that they had shed, their wanton cruelty seeks new objects. Fourscore men from Schechem, Samaria, and Shiloh, wholly ignorant of what had passed, were on their way to the temple at Jerusalem, with deepest signs of expressive woe to lament its desolations; and present, if but on the ruined altar, their oblations; so dear to them was the very dust thereof. These, with hypocritical tears, Ishmael went forth to meet, that he might decoy them to Mizpah, under pretence of an invitation from Gedaliah, as if he was yet alive; and they, unsuspecting of his design, went with him into the midst of the city, where they were instantly slain, and their bodies cast into one pit with those who fell with Gedaliah. This pit was dug by Afa, when he fortified Mizpah against Baalsha, 1 Kings, xv. 22. Ten men only escaped, by pleading the treasures that they had concealed in the field; and, covetousness prevailing over cruelty, they permitted them to live to discover them. While we read of such scenes of horror, how great

reason have we to bless God for his restraining grace upon the hearts and hands of wicked men: but for this the world would be an aceldama, a field of blood.

3. The bloody work being done, Ishmael attempts to secure the plunder and the prisoners, the king's daughters, and others, by a retreat to Baalis, king of the Ammonites, who seems to have instigated him to perpetrate this horrid deed.

2dly, A deed so atrocious could not be long concealed, and no sooner does the report of it reach Johanan, than, fired with indignation, he collected all the forces that he could muster, pursued the fugitives, and overtook them at the pool of Gibeon; which road, though not the direct one, they might have taken to prevent a pursuit, or get the treasures of the men whose lives they had spared: thus oftentimes we see men's covetousness their destruction. No sooner had Johanan and his troops appeared, than those with Ishmael immediately deserted him, and with difficulty he himself, with eight of the assassins, escaped to the land of Ammon; perhaps now unwelcome guests, when stripped of that plunder which the king of Ammon hoped to share. Johanan with his forces, and those whom he had recovered, either through his own fiery spirit, or the just judgment of God upon the people, which would give them no rest till they were utterly consumed, resolved hereupon to depart into Egypt; either hoping that under the Egyptian government they should enjoy greater safety, or, as was pretended, fearing the Chaldeans would punish them for the death of Gedaliah; though, in fact, they might rather have expected commendation from them, as his avengers. The resolution however being taken, they left Mizpah, and pitched in the habitation of Chimham (so called, probably, as being given by David to that son of Barzillai) near Bethlehem, in the way that led to Egypt, ready to fly thither if any danger threatened them. *Note.* Men's unbelieving fears often plunge them into the very miseries that they dread.

## C H A P. XLII.

*Ver. 2, 3. Pray for us, &c.]* It is the constant method of hypocrites to pretend an absolute submission to the will of God, till that will is found to run counter to their inclinations or interest. Lowth.

*Ver.*

them, I have heard *you*; behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words; and it shall come to pass, *that* whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you. I will declare *it* unto you: I will keep nothing back from you.

5 Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even-according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us.

6 Whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.

7 ¶ And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah.

8 Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest,

9 And said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him;

10 If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull *you* down, and I will plant you, and not pluck *you* up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you.

11 Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD: for I *am* with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.

12 And I will shew mercies unto you, that

he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.

13 But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the LORD your God,

14 Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell:

15 And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant of Judah, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there;

16 Then it shall come to pass, *that* the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die.

17 So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there; they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them.

18 For thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more.

19 ¶ The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into

Ver. 6. *Whether it be good, &c.*] *Whether it seem good, or whether it seem evil, &c.* Houbigant.

Ver. 7. *It came to pass after ten days*] The prophet prayed during these ten days, to obtain from God the revelation of his will; for the prophets had not always the spirit of prophecy at their command. The Spirit came and went as he would, and communicated himself only by intervals. Here Jeremiah begins the prophecy which he had as it were announced at the commencement of chap. xl. the relation whereof he has hitherto postponed, in order to inform his reader of what happened before, with which his prophecy was connected. During these *ten days* Jeremiah continued in retirement and prayer. See Calmet.

Ver. 15. *And now therefore hear, &c.*] *Therefore now hear, &c.* Houbigant.

Ver. 19. *The Lord hath said, &c.*] God commanded the Jews by Moses not to have any commerce with Egypt, that they might not practise the idolatrous customs of that country; and this was the reason why he often reproved them by his prophets for making alliances with Egypt. But there were particular reasons at this time for so severe a prohibition; for the Jews had learned several of their idolatrous practices from the Egyptians, and were confirmed in them by their example. Besides, it was the rival kingdom, which contended for empire with that of Babylon. The Jews therefore, by seeking protection in Egypt, refused to submit themselves to the king of Babylon,

Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day.

20 For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the LORD your God, saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our God; and according unto all that the LORD our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it.

lon, to whom God had given the government of Judæa, and all the neighbouring countries. See chap. xxvii. 6. and Lowth.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jeremiah in all these changes had by divine Providence been preserved: perhaps he had retired to Anathoth, and thus escaped the massacre at Mizpah, and now joined Johanan's company. Hereupon, in their present difficulties,

1. They unanimously resolve to consult him, and beg his prayers and advice. With greatest respect they approach him, desire a favourable acceptance of their request, and intreat him to pray for them; intimating how unworthy they thought themselves to open their lips, and what a confidence they placed in his interest in the divine regard. They were now reduced to a helpless few, as he saw; their condition truly deplorable, not knowing what to do, or whither to go, and therefore desiring divine direction. *Note;* In our difficulties and distress our first recourse should be made to God in prayer; and if we have not a prophet's word to guide us, we may hope for God's good providence to direct us.

2. Jeremiah readily undertakes the task. The slights that he had received did not abate his zeal and regard for the welfare of his countrymen. His prayers shall be ever for them, and he promises faithfully to report what God should reveal to him. *Note;* (1.) Ministers should be men of prayer; it is this must make way for the efficacy of their advice. (2.) It is required of such to be faithful, delivering, without reserve, the whole counsel of God.

3. They solemnly engage to conform to God's will entirely without reserve, and appeal to him for the uprightness of their intentions, professing their full conviction that it never can be well with them, unless they are unfeignedly obedient: a shocking piece of hypocrisy throughout, when they really meant nothing less. *Note;* (1.) They who would profit by a minister's prayers must pay serious attention to his preaching. (2.) We never can be sincere with God, if we do not obey his will so far as it is known to us. (3.) It can only then be ever well with us, when we are found following God in simplicity and truth.

2dly, God might well have refused to be inquired of by those whose hypocrisy he well knew; but, after ten days of suspense, he vouchsafes them an answer, which Jeremiah, in a public convocation of all the people, from the least unto the greatest, faithfully delivers.

1. God enjoins them to abide in the land where they were, nor think of going into Egypt; and, to engage them hereunto, he assures them of his own compassion

21 And now I have this day declared it to you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you.

22 Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn.

towards them; that he repented of the evil that he had done unto them; would change his providential dispensations towards them; and, instead of the destruction which they apprehended, build and plant them in their own land. Nor need they fear the king of Babylon; since God would shew them mercies, he shall be disposed to do the same; God will restrain him, and save them from the revenge which they feared he would take, and cause them peaceably and comfortably to possess the heritage of the Lord, with all who, having taken shelter in the neighbouring countries, would return to join them. *Note;* (1.) God's mercy is the foundation of all our hopes and happiness. (2.) He has in his hands the hearts of kings, and can turn them according to his own will and wisdom. (3.) They who carefully obey God's will may humbly expect his blessing.

2. He threatens them, in case of disobedience, with the most terrible destruction. If they refused to abide in Judæa, and, contrary to this clear declaration of God's will, thought themselves wiser than him, and wilfully resolved for Egypt, on the presumption that there they should see no war, or want of bread; he solemnly assures them, as many at least as set their faces to go into Egypt, and having the power might force the reluctant to join them, that thither God's wrath should pursue them; the evils that they feared should terribly overtake them; the pestilence, famine, and sword destroy them; so that not one of them should see their native land again; but all the storms of vengeance, which so lately broke upon Jerusalem, with redoubled fury should be poured upon them, and they be made an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach, to all who beheld their dire catastrophe. *Note;* (1.) They who think by sin to escape suffering, are only rushing on the thick bosses of God's buckler. (2.) The curse of God follows sinners close as their shadow; they can no more fly from it, than from themselves. (3.) They who have made themselves vile by their sin, God will make viler by the judgments that he will inflict upon them.

3. The prophet reproaches them with their abominable hypocrisy, and, to leave them without excuse, repeats the warning, *Go ye not into Egypt.* They knew in their consciences the dissimulation which they had used, and that, before they inquired of God, they had taken their resolution to go, and were resolved to abide by it: therefore, since they were obstinately hardened, and refused to obey God's word, notwithstanding the solemn appeal they had made to him of their sincerity, their doom is unchangeably fixed; and in Egypt, where they chose to sojourn, they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.

*Note;*

## C H A P. XLIII.

*Johanan, discrediting Jeremiah's prophesy, carrieth Jeremiah and others into Egypt. Jeremiah prophesieth by a type the conquest of Egypt by the Babylonians.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**A**ND it came to pass, *that* when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the LORD their God, for which the LORD their God had sent him to them, *even* all these words,

2 Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the LORD our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there.

3 But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon.

4 So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah.

5 But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations,

whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah;

6 *Even* men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah.

7 So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD. Thus came they *even* to Tahpanhes.

8 ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying,

9 Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which *is* at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah;

10 And say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them.

11 And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, *and deliver* such *as are* for death to death; and such *as are* for captivity to captivity; and such *as are* for the sword to the sword.

12 And I will kindle a fire in the houses of

*Notes.* (1.) Dissemblers with God are sure to bring fearful ruin on their own souls. (2.) If sinners will not obey, yet it becomes us to bear our testimony, and leave them at least inexcusable in their iniquity. (3.) The favourite schemes which the sinner forms to perpetuate his prosperity, or secure himself from harm, hurry him only the sooner to the precipice of ruin.

## C H A P. XLIII.

*Ver. 2. Azariah—and all the proud men*] That is, all those who refused to obey the commands of the Almighty. The Hebrew word זַיִלִים *zeilim*, signifies *pride, insolence, temerity, self-conceit*. The greater part of those who composed the company led on by Johanan, answered this character.

*Ver. 3. Baruch, the son of Neriah*] They would not directly accuse Jeremiah of partiality towards, or confederacy with the Chaldeans, as his enemies had done formerly, chap. xxxvii. 13. but they lay the blame upon Baruch, whom they knew to be an intimate companion of Jeremiah, and to have been kindly used by the Chaldeans upon his account. Houbigant renders the last clause of the verse, *That he may devote us to death, or that we may be carried away:*

*Ver. 7. Thus came they even to Tahpanhes*] That is to say, to Daphne. This was one of the principal cities of Egypt; and in it was a palace where their kings often resided. It is supposed by many to be the same city which was afterwards called *Daphne Pelusiaca*. See Itai. xxx. 4. St. Jerome tells us from an ancient tradition, that the prophet Jeremiah was stoned to death in this place by the Jews. See Lowth, and Calmet.

*Ver. 9. Take great stones—and hide them*] Bricks were the chief materials which the Babylonians used in their most stately buildings; so that there was constant occasion for such a brick-kiln near Pharaoh's palace. Yet this might be a great way from the dwelling-house itself, the courts of great kings being almost equal to cities for extent in antient times; particularly the palace in Babylon was four miles in compass, according to Diodorus Siculus, lib. 2. See the account of the emperor of China's gardens, in "Miscellaneous Pieces relating to the Chinese," vol. ii. p. 149.

*Ver. 11. For death, to death*] *For mortality, to the mortality.* See ch. xv. 1, 2. and the note.

*Ver. 12. I will kindle a fire*] *He shall kindle a fire.* Houbigant. "Nebuchadrezzar shall burn by my orders the temples

the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace.

13 He shall break also the images of Bethshemesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.

“temples of Egypt, and the palaces of the great men; and shall lead into captivity the kings, the subjects, and the gods.” The author of the Observations remarks, that, “as the Arabs frequently withdraw themselves out of the reach of very potent enemies, by retiring into the depths of the wilderness; so, if provoked, they can occasion them very great bitterneſſes, it not being poſſible to be always guarded againſt them. It is but a little while ago that the public papers gave an account of their destroying many thouſands of the Mecca pilgrims, upon ſome diſguſt which the Turkiſh government had given them, and filling the whole country with lamentation. Nor do the victories of the moſt ſucceſſful princes intimidate them in many caſes. Thus Curtius tells us, they ſet upon the troops of Alexander himſelf, the mighty conqueror of Aſia, when they found him unguarded in Lebanon, and ſlew ſome, and took others.” To theſe inſults we may ſuppoſe Jeremiah to refer in this place, when, after foretelling the ſucceſs of Nebuchadrezzar in Egypt, he ſays, *that he ſhould go forth from thence in peace.* The deſerts which lie between Egypt and Syria, are at this day terribly infeſted by the wild Arabs. “In travelling along the ſea-coaſt of Syria, and from Suez to mount Sinai, (ſays Dr. Shaw) we were in little or no danger of being robbed or inſulted;—in the holy land, and upon the iſthmus betwixt Egypt and the Red Sea, our conductors cannot be too numerous.” And then he goes on to inform his readers, that when he went from Ramah to Jeruſalem, though the pilgrims were more than ſix thouſand, and were eſcorted by four bands of Turkiſh infantry, excluſive of three or four hundred ſpawees, or cavalry, yet were they moſt barbarouſly inſulted and beaten by the Arabs. This ſame deſert, between Gaza and Egypt, appears to have been a ſcene of injuries alſo in the time of St. Jerome; and to have been under the power of the Arabs much more anciently ſtill; for La Roque, in a note upon D’Arvieux, obſerves, that Cambyſes, a little after Nebuchadrezzar’s time, was enabled to paſs through the deſerts, by means of thoſe ſupplies of water which an Arabian prince conveyed to him. A conquering prince’s paſſing out of a country, would not in common have been the ſubject of a prediction; but in this caſe, as it was the paſſing through deſerts where the Arabs at that time were, as they ſtill are, ſo much maſters, who were not afraid upon occaſion to inſult the moſt victorious princes, the mentioning of this circumſtance was not unworthy the ſpirit of prophecy. This too may lead us perhaps to the true ſenſe of the paſſage; *And he ſhall array himſelf with the land of Egypt, as a ſhepherd putteth on his garment; for I ſhould imagine it to ſignify, that “juſt as a perſon appearing to be a ſhepherd paſſed unmoleſted in common by the wild Arabs, ſo Nebuchadrezzar, by his ſubduing Egypt, ſhall induce the Arab tribes to ſuffer him to go out of that country unmoleſted; the poſſeſſion of Egypt*

“being to him, what a ſhepherd’s garment was to a ſingle perſon: for though upon occaſion the Arabs are not afraid to affront the moſt powerful princes, it is not to be imagined that conqueſt and power have no effect upon them.” *They that dwell in the wilderneſs,* ſays the Pſalmiſt, referring to theſe Arabs, *ſhall bow before Him whom he had deſcribed immediately before as having dominion from ſea to ſea, and from the river to the ends of the earth,* and which he queſtionleſs ſuppoſes to have been the great inducement to that ſubmiſſion. Thus the Arab who was charged with the conducting of Biſhop Poccocke to Jeruſalem, after ſecreting him for ſome time in his tent, when he took him out into the fields to walk there, put on him his ſtriped garment, apparently for his ſecurity, and that he might paſs for an Arab. So D’Arvieux, when he was ſent by the conſul of Sidon to the camp of the grand emir, equipped himſelf, for the greater ſecurity, exactly like an Arab, and accordingly paſſed unmoleſted and unqueſtioned. The employment of the Arabs is to feed cattle, and conſequentlly a *ſhepherd’s garment* may mean the ſame thing with *the Arab dreſs*: or, if it ſignifies ſomething different, as there are Ruſhwans and Turcmen about Aleppo, who live in tents and feed cattle, much in the ſame manner as the Arabs, according to Dr. Ruſſell; and as a paſſage in Iſaiah, xiii. 20. ſeems to inſinuate that there was the like diſtinction in his times;—*Neither ſhall the Arabian pitch tent there, neither ſhall the ſhepherds make their fold there;—that different dreſs of a ſhepherd, whatever it was, muſt equally protect a perſon in thoſe deſerts, for there would be no ſuch thing as feeding of cattle in them, if ſuch ſort of perſons were moleſted by the Arabs, as paſſengers are.* See *Observations*, p. 61.

*Ver. 13. The images of Beth-shemesh. The ſolar ſtatues of Heliopolis: or, The images of the houſe of the ſun.*

REFLECTIONS.—Iſt, To a meſſage ſo plain, there ſeemed no room for objection; but the devil will never fail to help ſinners to an excuſe for their infidelity and diſobedience.

1. They pretend that Jeremiah impoſed on them, and that this declaration was not from God. Johanan and Azariah, with all *the proud men*, dare give the prophet the lie, and impute to Baruch’s influence the answer that he reported as from God, as if they two had formed a deſign to give them into the hands of the Chaldeans to deſtroy them: a ſuggeſtion not only utterly improbable, but moſt malicious, as well as ungrateful, when theſe very men had rather foregone all the comforts which they might have enjoyed in Babylon, than deſert their own country in its diſtreſſed ſituation. *Note*; (1.) Pride is among the moſt damning ſins, the root of infidelity, and the ſure road to hell. (2.) The trueſt friends of their country, are often thus branded as the betrayers of it. (3.) They who are full of ill deſigns themſelves are the firſt to repreſent

Y

others

## C H A P. XLIV.

*Jeremiah expresseth the desolation of Judah for their idolatry. He prophesieth their destruction who commit idolatry in Egypt. The obstinacy of the Jews: Jeremiah threateneth them for the same; and for a sign, prophesieth the destruction of Egypt.*

[Before Christ 587.]

**T**HE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying,

2 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold this day they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein;

3 Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve

others in the same malignant colours. The ministers of God, who labour purely for the good of men's souls, are thus usually calumniated, as meaning only to serve themselves; but their judgment is with their God.

2. They march without delay for Egypt, resolved not to abide in Judæa, as God enjoined them; and all the Jews who had returned thither in hopes of a peaceable habitation are persuaded or compelled to accompany them; and, among the rest, Jeremiah and Baruch. Tahpanhes, the royal residence, was the place whither they bent their course; and, as Egypt was then their ally, they probably met with a friendly reception. *Note;* (1.) Proud men hate contradiction, and will have their way: if they cannot obtain consent, they will force compliance. (2.) They who go out of God's way have only themselves to blame for the consequences.

2dly, Though Jeremiah was now against his will in this strange land, God comforts him with the visits of his grace, and employs him to denounce his wrath: since they have rejected him as their teacher, he must be their troubler. They sought refuge in Egypt, hoping to be there protected from the Chaldeans; but thither shall the Chaldeans pursue them, and destroy both them and the Egyptians who have received them.

1. By a sign the destruction of Egypt is set forth. God commands Jeremiah to take great stones, and hide them in the brick-kiln, which was not far from Pharaoh's house, in the sight of the men of Judah, who would observe the sign, and be inquisitive about the meaning.

2. This is at large declared. The king of Babylon, employed as God's servant, who had destroyed Jerusalem, shall prosecute his victories, and Egypt fall before him: on these very stones should his throne be set, and his pavilion spread over it. By famine, pestilence, and the sword, those doomed to death must fall, and others be led into a miserable captivity: and, so far from being a ble

other gods, whom they knew not, *neither* they, you, nor your fathers.

4 Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.

5 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods.

6 Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day.

7 Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the God of Hosts, the God of Israel; Wherefore commit ye *this* great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling out of Judah, to leave you none to remain;

to defend their votaries, the numerous gods of Egypt shall not be able to defend themselves; their temples with the idols burnt, or the precious materials carried away among the spoils. As easily as a shepherd puts on his coat, and so adorned, shall Nebuchadrezzar and his army return laden with the wealth of Egypt, and leave the country in peace, intirely subjected to his government. *Note;* (1.) It is dangerous to admit those into our friendship, whom God pursues as an enemy, lest we share in their plagues. (2.) God often makes one wicked nation a scourge to another; and, while the conquerors mean nothing less, they are but the instruments that his providence employs.

## C H A P. XLIV.

*Ver. 1. At Tahpanhes, &c.]* That is to say, *At Daphne, and at Memphis, and in the country of Thebais.* Migdol was also called *Magdulus*. Migdol is mentioned Exod. xiv. 2. as situate near the Red Sea. But I do not take this to be the place here intended. מִגְדֹּל *Migdol* properly signifies a tower, and may, in all probability, have been given as a name to different cities in Egypt, where there was a distinguished object of that kind. The city of *Magdulus* is mentioned by Herodotus, Hecatæus, and others, and placed by Antoninus at the entrance of Egypt from Palestine, about twelve miles from Pelusium. This was too far distant from the Red Sea, to be in the route of the Israelites; but its situation in the neighbourhood of Tahpanhes, or Daphne, and its distance from Judæa, favour the supposition of its being the *Migdol* here spoken of. For then, as Bochart observes, we shall find the four places mentioned exactly in the order of their respective distances from that country; first, Migdol, or Magdulus; secondly, Tahpanhes, or Daphne; thirdly, Noph, or Memphis; and lastly, the district of Pathros, or Thebais. See Bochart Phaleg. lib. iv. cap. 27.

*Ver. 7. To cut off from you man and woman]* It was the design



8 In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth.

9 Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem?

10 They are not humbled *even* unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers.

11 ¶ Therefore, thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah.

12 And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, *and* fall in the land of Egypt; they shall *even* be consumed by the sword *and* by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, *and* an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.

13 For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence:

14 So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the

which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.

15 ¶ Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying,

16 *As for* the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee.

17 But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for *then* had we plenty of victuals, and were well and saw no evil.

18 But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all *things*, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.

19 And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her, without our men?

20 ¶ Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him *that* answer, saying,

21 The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes,

design or will of God, that this remnant should have kept possession of Judæa; but by going into Egypt, and defiling themselves with the idolatry of that nation, they provoked him to destroy them utterly.

*Ver. 14. So that none, &c.]* Houbigant renders the last clause, *Nor shall they return, except a few who shall escape.* It is evident from ver. 28. that some Jews were to escape the general destruction in Egypt, and to return into their own country, although but a few; and the same thing is implied in the latter sentence of this verse. But the former part of this verse excludes out of the number of escapers every individual of those that were called properly, *the*

*remnant of Judah*, those that had set their faces to enter Egypt to sojourn there in opposition to the express command of God, upon a presumption that they knew better than God how to consult their own restoration. The few then who were destined to escape, and to return back to the land of Judah, were to be such as had come into the land of Egypt in a less offensive manner, and happened to be there when the storm burst upon them.

*Ver. 19. And when we burned incense]* *But if we burn incense, and pour forth libations to the queen of heaven, do we make cakes for her without our husbands, that we may pour out, &c.?* Houbigant. See chap. vii. 18.

and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it *not* into his mind?

22 So that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, *and* because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.

23 Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day.

24 Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt;

25 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her: ye will surely

accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.

26 Therefore, hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth.

27 Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them.

28 Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose word shall stand, mine, or their's.

29 ¶ And this *shall be* a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil.

30 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the

*Ver. 25. Ye and your wives have both spoken] Your wives have spoken from your mouth, that which you have fulfilled with your hands, when you said, We, &c.—They have accomplished your vows, they have performed what you vowed. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 26. That my name shall no more be named, &c.] The Jews seem to have joined the worship of the true God with that of idols, as the Samaritans had done before them. Hence God declares, that he will not receive any such polluted worship at their hands, nor suffer his name to be any longer profaned by such hypocrites; but will consume them by a sudden and general destruction, or deliver them up to impenitence and utter apostacy. See Lowth and Calmet.*

*Ver. 30. I will give Pharaoh-hophra] Pharaoh, as we have often observed, was a name common to all the kings of Egypt. But several of them had some additional epithet to distinguish them from the rest. This prince was Apries, (see the note on chap. xxxvii. 5.) whose subjects rebelling, he sent Amasis one of his generals to reduce them to their duty; but no sooner had Amasis begun to make his speech, than they fixed a helmet on his head, and proclaimed him king. Amasis accepted of the title, and confirmed the Egyptians in their rebellion; and the greater part of the nation declaring for him, Apries was obliged to retire into Upper Egypt; and the country, being thus weakened by intestine war, was attacked and easily over-run by Nebuchadrezzar, who, on quitting it, left Amasis his viceroy. After Nebuchadrezzar's departure, Apries marched against*

Amasis; but, being defeated at Memphis, was taken prisoner, carried to Sais, and strangled in his own palace; thus verifying this prophecy. See Rollin's Ancient History, vol. i. Bishop Newton's Prophecies, vol. i. p. 362. and Calmet.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, No sufferings will change the heart or conduct, if we continue to resist the calls and drawings of divine grace. If any thing could have deterred a people from idolatry, we might well have thought that what the Jews had suffered would have been abundantly sufficient; yet here we behold them as mad upon their idols as ever. They were now dispersed in the several cities of Egypt; and Jeremiah is ordered,

1. To remind them of their past sins in opposition to the most earnest admonitions, and the consequences which they had beheld. They had seen their cities changed into ruinous heaps, their fruitful country turned into a desert, without man or beast. Their wickedness, especially their idolatries, was the cause thereof; the folly, as well as impiety of which, was amazing, and this aggravated by the repeated admonitions which they had rejected, and the earnest exhortations that they had despised. When God sent by his prophets, saying, *Oh do not this abominable thing that I hate*, they turned a deaf ear, and persisted in their abominations: therefore was his wrath poured out upon them, and the desolations of the land, *as at that day*, stood a fearful warning against the like provocations. *Note; (1.)*

hand of his enemies, and into the hand of king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah his life.  
king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar

Sin is the abominable thing that God hates, and we cannot conceive or speak of it with sufficient detestation of its evil and malignity. (2.) The ministers of God, who warn others of the fearful consequences of sin, must do it with an earnestness and deep concern, such as the case demands. (3.) Judgments upon others should be our warnings: we are doubly culpable to sin, not only against God's word, but against what our own eyes have seen.

2. He upbraids them with their present idolatries, burning incense to the gods of Egypt, bringing heavy guilt on their consciences, and assured destruction on body and soul, till they should be made a proverb of wickedness and wretchedness, and an execration among all nations. He upbraids them also with their forgetfulness of their fathers' wickedness, and their own, the cause of all the judgments under which they groaned: unaffected and unhumiliated with which, to that very day they persisted in their disobedience to God's law, and went on from evil to worse, to fill up the measure of their iniquities to the full. *Note;* (1.) When under judgments the heart grows harder, it is a dire symptom of a reprobate mind. (2.) They who sin against God, sin against their own souls, and bring upon themselves sure and swift destruction.

3. He denounces God's vengeance on them for these abominations. As many as set their faces to go into Egypt, and were the authors of that pernicious resolution, shall perish there without exception, from the least to the greatest, and by the very judgments that they designed thereby to avoid, which God had brought on Jerusalem: nor should a man of them ever again return unto their own land, as they hoped and desired when they might do it with greater safety than at present, except the few that escaped out of the hands of Johanan. Or it intimates how much worse their condition would be in Egypt, than that of the captives in Babylon: some of these should come back again, but none shall return from Egypt. *Note;* (1.) They who will not be ruled by God's word, will be broken by his rod. (2.) They who will take their affairs out of God's hands, and think their own projects more to be depended on than God's promises and providence, will meet with sure disappointment.

2dly, Never surely appeared more daring effrontery, and hardened impenitence.

1. They avow their determined resolution to abide in their idolatries, and follow the devices of their own hearts. The women had been chiefly engaged in the idolatrous rites, and their husbands approve and vindicate their conduct. *Note;* Custom in sin makes men daring and impudent.

2. They support their determination by many pretended arguments. They had authority and antiquity to recommend the practice: their fathers did so; their kings patronized it; they had numbers on their side; their whole land had made public profession of serving the queen of heaven, the moon, or the whole celestial host: nay, they affirm, that then they had plenty of all good things, and

they date all their miseries from their neglect of their idols' service. *Note;* (1.) Antiquity, authority, numbers, &c. are no arguments to vindicate any practice which the word of God forbids. (2.) Such is the deceivableness of unrighteousness, that the very methods which God takes to separate men from their sins, they urge as arguments to harden themselves therein.

3. The women, regarding themselves as most aimed at by the prophet's rebuke, vindicate themselves by pleading their husbands' countenance and approbation. Absurd pretence! as if that could authorize them to transgress the law of God. *Note;* (1.) Disobedience is duty, when superiors enjoin or countenance what God forbids. (2.) It is grievous, when they who should assist each other in the way to heaven are mutual tempters, and harden each other in their sins.

3dly, The prophet is neither intimidated by their numbers, nor discouraged by their obstinacy. If they will not reform, at least they shall hear their doom.

1. He contradicts the false assertion which they had made, that all their troubles arose from their neglecting the service of their idols, and shews them their real origin. It is true, God did long bear with their provocations, in hopes that they would repent; but he did not overlook or forget them: no; he saw, and, unable longer to forbear, poured out his vengeance upon them for their wickedness, their idolatries, their rebellion, and disobedience to his warnings; for which their land was a desolation, and themselves a curse at that day.

2. God abandons them to the sin and ruin which they have chosen; and this is addressed particularly to the women, who were chief in the transgression. They had declared their determined purpose of persisting in their abominations, and fulfilling their vows to the queen of heaven; as if their being under a vow to do evil could lay them under an obligation to perform it: therefore he gives them up to their own delusions; and since they said, "Depart," he will depart, confirming it with an oath, to shew the immutability of his counsel concerning them. They will lose all the remains of religion; they will no more swear by his name: either he will utterly consume all the Jews in Egypt by famine and the sword, and not leave a man to profane his holy name; or they shall be left to themselves, and sink into the idolatries of Egypt, incorporate with that nation, and forget the very mention of Israel's God. A few indeed, who, as Baruch, stood firm amid the general apostacy, shall escape this destruction, and return again to their own land; and they shall see whose word shall stand, theirs, who promised the idolaters impunity, or his, who threatened them with ruin. *Note;* (1.) A greater curse cannot light upon the sinner, than to be given up of God to the devices of his own heart. (2.) However men flatter themselves, it will soon be proved whose word shall stand, God's or theirs.

3. God gives them a sign of the certainty of the threatened judgments. The king of Egypt, their protector,

## C H A P. XLV.

*Baruch being dismayed, Jeremiah instructeth and comforteth him.*

[Before Christ 606.]

**T**HE word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,

2 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch ;

3 Thou didst say, Woe is me now ! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow ; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.

4 ¶ Thus shalt thou say unto him ; The

rector, shall be shortly given into Nebuchadnezzar's hands, as Zedekiah had been ; and, so far from defending them, should be ruined himself. *Note* ; They who for human confidences forsake the living God, shall find them no better than broken reeds.

## C H A P. XLV.

**T**HIS chapter evidently belongs to the 36th ; but Grotius gives a reason why the collectors of Jeremiah's prophecies placed it here. "The prophecies and histories," says he, "being finished, which belonged to the kings and people of Judah, one is subjoined belonging to a single person ; as in the epistles of St. Paul to the churches are subjoined what concern particular persons." The prophet afterwards adds the prophecies that respect other nations, with which his book concludes. As to the last chapter, we shall deliver our opinion when we come to it.

*Ver. 3. The Lord hath added grief* ] "The sorrows which I felt for the threatenings denounced against my country and religion are increased by my own troubles ; being sought after by the king's commands, in order to be put to death." See chap. xxxvi. 26.

*Ver. 4. Behold, &c.* ] "The land and people which have so long flourished under the peculiar care of my providence, I resolve now to give up to utter destruction : (see chap. xxxi. 28.) And art thou better (ver. 5.) than the rest of my people, that thou shouldst expect to be exempted from the common evils ?" Houbigant renders the last words, *For the whole land is mine.*

**R**EFL ECTIONS.—Baruch had been the prophet Jeremiah's faithful assistant, chap. xxxvi. and thereby involved himself in trouble, and exposed himself to the fury of the enraged Jehoiakim. We have,

1. The consternation that God observes in him when the warrants were out for apprehending him. *Woe is me now !* he looked upon himself as a dead man ; *for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow* ; after all the pains that he had taken, and the reproaches that he had endured, now his very life is in danger ; and the anguish that he felt, on

LORD saith thus ; Behold, *that* which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land.

5 And seekest thou great things for thyself ? seek *them* not : for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD : but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

## C H A P. XLVI.

*Jeremiah propheseth the overthrow of Pharaoh's army at Euphrates, and the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar : he comforteth Jacob in their chastisement.*

[Before Christ 606.]

**T**HE word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles ;

transcribing the dreadful doom of his people, is increased by his own sufferings. *I fainted in my sighing*, unable to support the load of grief that oppressed him ; *and I find no rest*, from his sorrow, or any composure of mind under his troubles. *Note* ; (1.) Our hearts are very unwilling to bear the cross. (2.) Many of our complaints arise more from our unbelieving fears, than our real danger. (3.) We should watch over the temper of our hearts, and the door of our lips, when tempted to impatience or despair under our sufferings ; for God observes, and will reprove us for it.

2. Jeremiah, from God, checks his aspiring thoughts, the disappointment of which seems to have been at the root of his complaints. He was a man of abilities, a scribe to the prophet, and a follower of his piety ; and he might hope that this would recommend him to his countrymen, and enable him to rise to some distinguished post : but it was absurd in him *to seek great things for himself*, when the whole nation was devoted to ruin. *Note* ; (1.) If we had less expectations from the world, we should have fewer disappointments and less cause to complain. (2.) Even good men in general are slow of heart to believe what Jesus hath spoken, *My kingdom is not of this world*, and too often have their hearts been too much attached to worldly hopes and prospects.

3. Though his hopes of greatness are blasted, his life is secured to him, and that is a distinguishing mercy, when death spreads around his universal ravages. In all places, and amidst every danger, God promises to protect him, and with this he has cause to be abundantly satisfied and thankful.

## C H A P. XLVI.

*Ver. 1. The word, &c.* ] This title belongs to the five following chapters, and refers to the general denunciation of God's judgments upon the countries round about Judæa. These prophecies are evidently arranged out of the order of time ; but those who collected the writings of Jeremiah judged proper, as it seems, without confining themselves to order of time, to join together those prophecies which were not so immediately connected with the affairs of the Jews. See Calmet, and Grotius.

2 Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah.

3 Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle.

4 Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with *your* helmets; furbish the spears, *and* put on the brigandines.

5 Wherefore have I seen them dismayed *and* turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: *for* fear *was* round about, saith the LORD.

6 Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates.

7 Who *is* this *that* cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers?

8 Egypt riseth up like a flood, and *his* waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith,

I will go up, *and* will cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof.

9 Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians that handle *and* bend the bow.

10 For this *is* the day of the LORD God of Hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the LORD GOD of Hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.

11 Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; *for* thou shalt not be cured.

12 The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, *and* they are fallen both together.

13 ¶ The word that the LORD spake to

*Ver. 2. Pharaoh-necho*] This prince is remarkable for his attempt to join the Nile to the Red Sea, by cutting a canal from one to the other; though they are above one hundred and eighteen English miles asunder; but after the loss of one hundred and twenty thousand workmen, he was obliged to desist. His first military action was against the Medes and Babylonians, who, having by the capture of Nineveh destroyed the Assyrian empire, became formidable to the neighbouring states. Josiah opposed him in his march through his country; but was defeated, and received a wound in the battle, which proved mortal. Necho continued his march after this victory, defeated the Babylonians, took Carchemish, and, securing it with a strong garrison, returned into his own country. Nabopolassar, observing that all Syria and Palestine had revolted on account of the reduction of Carchemish, sent his son Nebuchadrezzar with an army against Necho, whom he vanquished near the river Euphrates, recovered Carchemish, and subdued the revolted provinces, according to this prophecy of Jeremiah, in the year of the world, 3367; before Christ 607. See Rollin's Ancient Hist. vol. i. book 1. and Calmet.

*Ver. 6. Let not the swift flee away*] The words imply that it was God's command that none of the Egyptian army should escape. The river Euphrates was northward of Judæa: so Babylon is described as lying northward, being situate upon that river. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. x. cap. 7.

*Ver. 7, 8. Who is this, &c.*] The prophet speaks of Necho, and represents the grand preparations which he made to go to the succour of Carchemish. He flattered himself that nothing was capable of resisting the force of

his arms. Jeremiah compares him to the inundations of the Nile, and this figure is very frequent in Scripture: see Isai. viii. 8. xvii. 12, 13. Jer. xlvii. 2. Instead of, *are moved*, ver. 7, 8. we may read, *Gush out, or overflow*; and ver. 9. *Mount ye the horses, pride yourselves in chariots, and let the mighty ones come forth; Cush and Phut handling the shield, and the Ludim expert in the use of the bow.*

*Ver. 10. For this is the day of the Lord*] That is, as it follows, *the day of his vengeance*; hence *the day of the Lord* is used in the New Testament to signify the day of judgment: the same phrase of *a sacrifice in the north country*, (Bozrah) is used by Isaiah, ch. xxxiv. 6.

*Ver. 11. Go up into Gilead, &c.*] The practice of physic was one of the chief arts in Egypt, wherein every distinct distemper had its peculiar physician, who confined himself to the study and care of that alone; so that every family in the city must needs swarm with the faculty. It was this circumstance for which the Egyptian nation was peculiarly distinguished, not only by the earliest Greek writers, but likewise by the holy prophets. This passage is remarkable; the prophet foretelling the overthrow of Pharaoh's army at the Euphrates, describes Egypt by this characteristic of her skill in medicine; *In vain shalt thou use many medicines.* Gilead was famous for producing the celebrated balm of that name. In allusion to the practice of going thither for relief in dangerous cases, the prophet ironically advises the Egyptians to have recourse to this sovereign remedy, importing that all their methods of escaping the impending destruction would be in vain. See Div. Legat. vol. iii. and Lowth.

*Ver. 12. Thy shame*] *Thy disgrace.*

*Ver.*

Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come *and* smite the land of Egypt.

14 Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee.

15 Why are thy valiant *men* swept away? they stood not, because the LORD did drive them.

16 He made many to fall, yea, one fell upon another: and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our nativity, from the oppressing sword.

17 They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt *is but* a noise; he hath passed the time appointed.

18 *As* I live, saith the King, whose name *is* the LORD of Hosts, Surely as Tabor *is* among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, *so* shall he come.

19 O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity; for Noph shall be waste and desolate, without an inhabitant.

20 Egypt *is like* a very fair heifer, *but* destruction cometh: it cometh out of the north.

21 Also her hired men *are* in the midst of her; like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, *and* are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, *and* the time of their visitation.

22 The voice thereof shall go like a serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood.

23 They shall cut down her forest, saith the LORD, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and *are* innumerable.

24 The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north.

25 The LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, saith; Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and *all* them that trust in him:

26 And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterwards it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD.

27 ¶ But fear not thou, O my servant

Ver. 14. Noph—Tahpanhes] That is to say, Memphis—Daphne.

Ver. 15. Why are thy valiant men swept away] Why is the valiant one swept away? He could not stand because the Lord drove him. The prophet speaks of Pharaoh-necho. Houbigant.

Ver. 16. He made many to fall] The number of those who fall is increased; so, each one meets his neighbour, and says, Arise, let us return, &c. Houbigant. See chap. xxv. 38.

Ver. 17. They did cry there, &c.] They cried there to Pharaoh, king of Egypt; the storm or shock has already passed the appointed time. Houbigant. See Isai. x. 3.

Ver. 18. Surely, &c.] Surely like Tabor among the mountains, and like Carmel by the sea, shall one come. Or, as sure as that Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, it shall come to pass. The first sense seems preferable: Houbigant explains it thus: "As much as Tabor overtops all other mountains, so much shall the Chaldeans be superior to the Egyptians; and as the waves of the sea roar in vain at the foot of mount Carmel, so shall the Egyptian waves rage in vain." See ver. 8.

Ver. 20. Egypt is like a very fair heifer] Egypt is a fair and elegant heifer: the drivers shall come upon her from the

north: ver. 21. For her hired men, who in the midst of her were like fatted bullocks, have turned back, and fled away. Houbigant. The prophet delights in that kind of imagery which marks out a people by their singularities or pre-eminence. Thus, in the passage before us, he alludes to the peculiar worship of the Egyptians; for the worship of Isis and Osiris under the figure of a cow and a bull, and afterwards by the animals themselves, was the most celebrated in all the Egyptian ritual. See Divine Legation, vol. ii.

Ver. 22. The voice thereof shall go like a serpent] Her voice hisses like a serpent; alluding to a wounded serpent, whence the similitude is taken. The LXX make use of the word *συσζωντος* sibilantis. The Chaldee, Vulgate, and other versions have it, shall sound like brass; wherein it is thought by some that the prophet alludes to the *sisstrum* used in the worship of Isis; but the former seems to be the best interpretation, and is confirmed by Isai. xxix. 4.

Ver. 25. I will punish the multitude of No] I will punish Ammon of No. Ezekiel calls it, Haman No; and Nahum calls it No-Ammon. The name is generally thought to be derived from Jupiter Ammon, whose temple was in this city: supposed to be the same which profane authors call Thebes, celebrated in Homer's time for its hundred gates.

The

Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and

Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make *him* afraid.

28 Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant,

The LXX render it *Dispolis*, the Greek name for Thebes, a city famous for the worship of Jupiter Ammon. See Boch. Phaleg. pars i. lib. i. cap. 6. Herodotus, lib. iii. and Universal History, vol. ii. p. 89.

*Ver. 28, 29. Fear not thou, &c.]* The preservation of the Jews through so many ages, and the total destruction of their enemies, are wonderful events; and are made still more wonderful by being signified beforehand by the Spirit of prophecy, as particularly in the passage before us. Their preservation is really one of the most illustrious acts of divine providence. They are dispersed among all nations, yet not confounded with any. The drops of rain which fall, nay, the great rivers which flow into the ocean, are soon mingled and lost in that immense body of waters: and the same, in all human probability, would have been the fate of the Jews; they would have been mingled and lost in the common mass of mankind; but on the contrary, they flow into all parts of the world, mix with all nations, and yet keep separate from all. They still live as a distinct people, and yet they nowhere live according to their own laws, nowhere elect their own magistrates, nowhere enjoy the full exercise of their religion. Their solemn feasts and sacrifices are limited to one certain place, and that hath been now for many ages in the hands of strangers and aliens, who will not suffer them to come thither. No people have continued unmixed so long as they have done, not only of those who have sent colonies into foreign countries, but even of those who have abided in their own country. The northern nations have come in swarms into the more southern parts of Europe; but where are they now to be discerned and distinguished? The Gauls went forth in great bodies to seek their fortune in foreign parts; but what traces or footsteps of them are now remaining any where? In France, who can separate the race of the ancient Gauls from the various other people who from time to time have settled there? In Spain, who can distinguish exactly between the first possessors, the Spaniards, and the Goths and Moors, who conquered and kept possession of the country for some ages? In England, who can pretend to say, with certainty, which families are derived from the ancient Britons, and which from the Romans, Saxons, Danes, or Normans? The most ancient and honourable pedigrees can be traced up only to a certain period, and beyond that there is nothing but conjecture and uncertainty, obscurity and ignorance: but the Jews can go up higher than any nation; they can even deduce their pedigree from the beginning of the world. They may not know from what particular tribe or family they are descended, but they know certainly that they all sprung from the stock of Abraham. And yet the contempt with which they have been treated, and the hardships that they have undergone in almost all other countries, should, one would think, have made them desirous to forget or renounce their original: but they profess it, they glory in it: and after so many wars, massacres, and persecutions, they still subsist, and are still very numerous. And what

but a supernatural power could have preserved them in such a manner, as no other nation upon earth hath been preserved? Nor is the providence of God less remarkable in the destruction of their enemies, than in their own preservation. For, from the beginning, who have been the great enemies and oppressors of the Jewish nation, removed them from their own land, and compelled them into captivity and slavery? The Egyptians afflicted them much, and detained them in bondage several years. The Assyrians carried away captive the ten tribes of Israel, and the Babylonians afterwards the two remaining tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The Syro-Macedonians, especially Antiochus Epiphanes, cruelly persecuted them: and the Romans utterly dissolved the Jewish state, and dispersed the people, so as that they have never been able to recover their city and country again. And where are now these great and famous monarchies, which in their turns subdued and oppressed the people of God? Are they not vanished as a dream, and not only their power, but their very names, lost in the earth? The Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians were overthrown, and entirely subjugated by the Persians; and the Persians, it is remarkable, were the restorers of the Jews, as well as the destroyers of their enemies. The Syro-Macedonians were swallowed up by the Romans; and the Roman empire, great and powerful as it was, was broken into pieces by the incursions of the northern nations; while the Jews are subsisting as a distinct people at this day. And what a wonder of providence is it, that the vanquished should so many ages survive the victors, and the former be spread all over the world, while the latter are no more?—Nay, not only nations have been punished for their cruelties to the Jews, but divine vengeance has pursued even single persons, who have been their persecutors and oppressors. The first-born of Pharaoh was destroyed, and he himself with his host drowned in the sea. Most of those who oppressed Israel in the days of the Judges, came to an untimely end. Nebuchadnezzar was stricken with madness, and the crown was transferred from his family to strangers. Antiochus Epiphanes, and Herod, died in great agonies with ulcers, and vermin issuing from them. Flaccus, governor of Egypt, who barbarously plundered and oppressed the Jews of Alexandria, was afterwards banished and slain: and Caligula, who persecuted the Jews for refusing to do divine honours to his statue, was murdered in the flower of his age, after a short and wicked reign. But where are now—since they have absolutely rejected the Gospel, and been no longer the peculiar people of God,—where are now such visible manifestations of a divine interposition in their favour? The Jews would do well to consider this point; for rightly considered, it may be an effectual means of opening their eyes, and of turning them to Christ our Saviour. See Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, disert. viii. sect. 2.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophecies in this and the following chapters relate to the neighbouring nations of



faith the LORD: for I *am* with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full

end of thee, but correct thee in measure: yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

the Gentiles. This describes the defeat of the Egyptians, who had often been the oppressors of God's Israel, and now their unprofitable allies: endeavouring to support them in their rebellion, they bring his arms upon themselves to their destruction.

1. The Lord, ironically deriding their vain confidence and vast preparations, bids them collect their forces, fit on their armour, marshal their host, rush into the battle, vainly concluding the victory secure, and that the armies of Babylon, their cities and empire, would be utterly overwhelmed by their numerous forces, as the lands of Egypt were overflowed by the swellings of the Nile. *Note;* They who are the most self-confident are usually nearest the precipice of ruin.

2. He upbraids their cowardice and inglorious flight when the army of the Chaldeans met them. Where is now their boasted valour, and great swelling words of vanity? See them broken, dispirited, in panic fear; their mightiest warriors turn their backs, and seek their safety in an ignominious flight; but seek it in vain; since God obstructs their way, they cannot escape; their swifter pursuers are at their heels; they stumble near the Euphrates, to which they had advanced, and fall by the sword of the Chaldeans, drunk with the blood of the slain; for *this is the day of the Lord God of Hosts, a day of vengeance* for all the wrongs that they have done his people, and for the late slaughter of Josiah; and *a sacrifice* to divine justice for all their abominations. *Note;* (1.) Sinners may expect a day of recompence. (2.) Flight is vain from the sword of God's vengeance. (3.) One dismaying impression from God can make cowards of the bravest. Let not, therefore, the strong man glory in his strength.

3. He declares their wound incurable. In vain should they attempt to repair their defeat, or to conceal their shame: the nations around shall hear the cries of the wounded, and the groans of the dying; *the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty*, heaps on heaps, pierced by the swords of their enemies; and no more shall they be able to make head against their foes, when, like a flood, they shall shortly break in upon them. *Note;* They whom God consigns to ruin, struggle in vain against their destiny.

2dly, We have another prophecy in this chapter. The former regards the defeat of the Egyptians at Carchemish, this the destruction of their country some years after. In those very cities where the infatuated Jews sought refuge, there must the land of Egypt's utter ruin be proclaimed. We have,

1. The alarm spread through the land. The sword of the Chaldeans was making havoc in the neighbouring countries; it is time for them therefore to prepare for war.

2. Their auxiliaries desert them, on the first defeat, finding themselves unable to defend the frontiers, and not supported by Pharaoh as they expected. God fought against them, destroyed and dispirited them, so that they

fled together in the day of their calamity: willing, therefore, to have a pretext for retiring to their own countries, they cry out against Pharaoh, as having deceived and betrayed them: he boasted of certain victory, and the vast armies that he could raise; and now they find it but mere empty noise, and boast without ability. *Note;* (1.) When God fights, resistance is vain. (2.) They who deceive others with false hopes, deserve themselves to be deceived in their expectations from them.

3. Their ruin is determined by that eternal King whom all the hosts of heaven and earth obey. They are doomed to slaughter by the Chaldean sword, as the trees of the forest fall before the hewer's axe: thick as the locusts which once of old devoured the land, shall the soldiers of the king of Babylon cover the country; Egypt, like a heifer, so called perhaps in allusion to the ox which they worshipped, must bend her fair neck to the yoke, and this daughter, living in ease and affluence, must prepare to go into captivity. The destruction is sure as the mountains Tabor and Carmel; yea, so surely shall *Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him*, be overwhelmed; or (as some would explain it,) towering in pride as these mighty hills, the Babylonian conqueror shall advance, bear down his enemies, however many or mighty, with the false gods in whom they placed their confidence, and lay the country desolate and waste, depopulate the cities, and enslave the inhabitants: like the serpent wallowing in the dust, and hissing, so low should they be reduced, nor dare, for fear of offending, to make their complaints aloud: though this may also be interpreted of the army of the Chaldeans, hissing as they marched, and breathing out threatenings against their Egyptian foes. Thus complete should be their overthrow; for, though the army employed is Nebuchadnezzar's, the punishment is from God. *Note;* (1.) Whatever instruments are employed, God's hand should be seen in every visitation. (2.) They who trust in any thing but God alone, may expect disappointment. (3.) When troubles threaten, it is a call to prepare for them.

4. A gleam of hope closes the awful scene. *Afterwards it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the Lord.* Though it never after rose to its pristine splendor, it became a great and populous nation after forty years, Ezek. xxix. 13, 14. for God wounds, and he heals.

5. The people of God have a gracious promise to comfort them amid these desolations, either the few faithful in Egypt, or those in Babylon: if Egypt shall return from its captivity, much more shall they. The same assurance was given them before, chap. xxx. 11, 12. and this was in part fulfilled in their recovery from the Babylonish yoke, but shall be more eminently seen at the latter day; for which purpose, amid all the changes of nations and fall of empires, they are to this day preserved a distinct people, and may expect again to see rest and ease in their own land.

C H A P. XLVII.

*The destruction of the Philistines.*

[Before Christ 610.]

**T**HE word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.

2 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl.

3 At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong *horses*, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels,

the fathers shall not look back to *their* children for feebleness of hands:

4 Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth: for the LORD will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor.

5 Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off *with* the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself?

6 O thou sword of the LORD, how long *will it be* ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.

7 How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it.

C H A P. XLVII.

*Ver. 1. Before that Pharaoh smote Gaza*] When the country was in seeming quiet and security. The destruction of Gaza probably followed Pharaoh's victories at Megiddo and Carchemish, when Judæa became tributary to him. See 2 Chron. xxxv. 20. xxxvi. 3. This prophecy was the more remarkable, as at the time of its delivery there was a common hatred to the Jews between the Chaldeans and the Philistines. See Grotius.

*Ver. 2. Behold, waters rise up out of the north*] "Behold the army of Nebuchadrezzar, which, bursting forth like a deluge, shall cover the land of the Philistines." See the 7th and 8th verses of the last chapter.

*Ver. 3. At the noise, &c.] At the clapping, or clattering sound of the hoofs of his horses, &c. The fathers look not back, &c.* Every one is so possessed with a sense of his own danger, that he does not think of those who are most nearly and tenderly related to him. Compare chap. ix. 4. Mic. vii. 5, 6. Matt. x. 35, 36.

*Ver. 4. The remnant of the country of Caphtor*] *The remains of the island of the Cappadocians.* Houbigant. The word *island*, as we have before observed, is often used in Scripture for a country. See Deut. ii. 23.

*Ver. 5. With the remnant of their valley*] Gaza and Ashkelon were about twelve miles distant from each other, near the sea, in a valley, of whose beauty and fertility an accurate traveller has given the following description: "We passed this day through the most pregnant and pleasant valley that ever eye beheld. On the right hand a ridge of high mountains (whereon stands Hebron); on the left hand the Mediterranean sea, bordered with continued hills, beset with variety of fruits.—The champaign between about twenty miles over, full of flowery hills ascending leisurely, and not much surmounting their ranker vallies; with groves of olives, and other fruits, dispersedly adorned." Sandys's Travels, book iii. p. 150. The author adds, that in his time "this wealthy bottom (as are all the rest) was for the most part uninhabited, but only for a few small and contemptible villages." A state of desolation owing to the oppressions of a barbarous

and ill-advised government. But we may easily conceive the populousness which must have prevailed there in its better days, especially if we consider the power that the Philistines once possessed, and the armies they brought into the field; although their country was scarcely forty English miles in length, and much longer than it was broad.

*Ver. 6. O thou sword of the Lord*] It is with great elegance that life is attributed to inanimate things. This dialogue between the sword of the Lord and the prophet, is a very bold, and at the same time a very sublime propopœia. See Bishop Lowth's 13th Prelection. Schultens reads the latter clause, *Retreat to thy scabbard; strike, and be still.*

*Ver. 7. Sea-shore.] Sea-coast.*

REFLECTIONS.—The Philistines had been the inveterate enemies of Israel: they had received many a severe check in the days of David; but seem to have become a very powerful people, and were in peace, and strongly fortified, when this prophecy was delivered, which was before Pharaoh smote Gaza, an event supposed to have happened during his expedition to Carchemish.

1. The northern army of the Chaldeans is represented as a swelling flood, which bears down all opposition. In terrors at their approach, the Philistines will howl, unable to resist the torrent; affrighted at the stamping of the horses and the rattling of the chariots, and flying as if death was at their heels, their fears should overcome the strongest natural affection, so that they should not look back to *their children*, and through *feebleness of hands* be unable to defend or carry them away. It is the day of divine appointment for the destruction of the Philistines; and Tyre and Zidon must share the like fate, together with *the remnant of the country of Caphtor*, their near kin and neighbours. Their cities are spoiled, their country plundered, their inhabitants destroyed, and Gaza and Ashkelon are described with signs of deepest woe, shaving off their hair, and cutting themselves, bemoaning these desolations. *Note;* The strongest holds are no proof against the artillery of divine threatenings.

## CHAP. XLVIII.

*The judgment of Moab, for their pride, for their security, for their carnal confidence, and for their contempt of God, and his people. The restoration of Moab.*

[Before Christ 599.]

**A** GAINST Moab thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Woe unto Nebo, for it is spoiled: Kiriathaim is confounded and taken; Misgab is confounded and dismayed.

2 *There shall be* no more praise of Moab: in Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come, and let us cut it off from *being* a nation. Also thou shalt be cut down, O madmen; the sword shall pursue thee.

3 A voice of crying *shall be* from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction.

4 Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard.

5 For in the going up of Luhith continual weeping shall go up; for in the going down

of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction.

6 Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness.

7 ¶ For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity *with* his priests and his princes together.

8 And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape: the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the LORD hath spoken.

9 Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away: for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein.

10 Cursed *be* he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed *be* he that keepeth back his sword from blood.

11 ¶ Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel,

2. The prophet, tenderly affected with the scene, cries out, *O thou sword of the Lord!* (for though in the hand of the Chaldeans, yet God put it there), *how long will it be ere thou be quiet?* and the dire contention cease; *put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest and be still.* A good man prays thus for his bitterest enemies; and charity teaches us to pray that wars may cease in all the world, and a stop be put to the effusion of human gore so lavishly shed. But when God has a controversy, and his sword is drawn against a nation, *how can it be quiet,* till it has executed vengeance on God's enemies, and accomplished his purposes towards a guilty people? *seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore,* the places above-mentioned, *there hath he appointed it?* Note; Every thing here below is under the immediate government of God; even the ambition of princes, and the horrid ravages of war, are instruments in his hands to execute the decrees of his providence on those nations whose provocations call for judgment.

## CHAP. XLVIII.

*Ver. 1. Against Moab, &c.]* The Moabites were in league with Zedekiah against Nebuchadnezzar: see chap. xxvii. 3, 9, &c. But they gave Israel no assistance against him. See ver. 26, 27. *Nebo* and *Kiriathaim*, were the names of two cities of Moab, the latter of which was given to the Reubenites; but the inhabitants of Moab afterwards recovered it, together with several other places. The reader will refer to Isaiah's prophecies concerning Moab. Instead of *Misgab*, Houbigant and many other commentators read, *That high structure, or that which boasted itself.*

*Ver. 5. For in the going-up of Luhith] Surely at the ascent of Luhith weeping shall go up after weeping; surely at the de-*

*scend of Horonaim mine enemies have heard a cry of destruction.* Houbigant reads, *For they have ascended the height of Luhith with weeping: In the descent of Horonaim the enemies, &c.*

*Ver. 6. Heath] Withered tree,* Hiller, p. 86.

*Ver. 7. Chemosh shall go forth into captivity] It was customary for the heathens to carry the images of their gods with them to battle; and the capture of these deities was deemed a very great acquisition. The prophets frequently ridiculed this absurdity of the Gentiles. See ch. xliii. 11, 12. xlv. 25. and Calmet.*

*Ver. 8. And the spoiler shall come] That is Nebuchadnezzar. This character is frequently given him in Scripture. See ch. li. 48. and Isai. xxxiii. 1, &c.*

*Ver. 10. Cursed be he, &c.] "Cursed is he who doth not execute with fidelity and the greatest exactness the orders of the Lord; cursed will ye be, O Chaldeans, if you spare Moab, if you treat her not with the utmost severity, since God hath appointed her to destruction, and you are only the executors of his just vengeance." Calmet.*

*Ver. 11. Moab hath been at ease] Instead of hath been at ease, the Chaldee renders, hath been opulent;—from his youth, means from the time of Salmanezar. He hath never felt any calamity, since that judgment foretold by Isaiah, and inflicted by Salmanezar; so that there were forty years between that captivity, and this here spoken of. The comparison between the state of the Moabites and that of wine, is elegant. It is kept up with great propriety: and as it is well known, that wine which remains long on its lees, is of a strong body, the prophet's simile imports that the Moabites increased in spirit and insolence in proportion to the duration of their national success and tranquillity. By wanderers in the next verse, are meant the Chaldean soldiers:*

neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.

12 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles.

13 And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Beth-el their confidence.

14 ¶ How say ye, We are mighty, and strong men for the war?

15 Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of Hosts.

16 The calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction hasteth fast.

17 All ye that are about him, bemoan him; and all ye that know his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod!

18 Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, come down from thy glory, and sit in thirst; for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee, and he shall destroy thy strong holds.

19 O inhabitant of Aroer, stand by the way, and espy; ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth, and say, What is done?

20 Moab is confounded; for it is broken

down: howl and cry; tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is spoiled.

21 And judgment is come upon the plain country; upon Holon, and upon Jahazah, and upon Mephaath,

22 And upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblathaim,

23 And upon Keriathaim, and upon Bethgamul, and upon Beth-meon,

24 And upon Kerioth, and upon Bozrah, and upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near.

25 The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the LORD.

26 ¶ Make ye him drunken: for he magnified himself against the LORD: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision.

27 For was not Israel a derision unto thee? was he found among thieves? for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy.

28 O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth.

29 We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud,) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.

30 I know his wrath, saith the LORD; but it shall not be so; his lies shall not so effect it.

diers. The words may be read, *He hath settled upon his lees, and hath not been decanted from vessel to vessel: that is, he hath never gone into captivity; therefore his flavour remaineth in him, and his scent is not changed or soured; ver. 12. Therefore—I will send unto him decanters, or, those who shall decant him, and dash his bottles; or disturbers, who shall shake him up, and shall rack off his vessels, and their bottles in pieces.*

*Ver. 15. Moab is spoiled] Go up, O spoiler, to Moab; ascend into her cities; let her chosen young men descend to the slaughter, &c.*

*Ver. 17. How is the strong staff broken] How is the powerful rod, the glorious sceptre broken! The Moabites were remarkable for their pride and vanity; of which Jeremiah speaks in the 29th verse.*

*Ver. 18. And sit in thirst] Dibon was a village in Moab famous for its waters. The prophet foretels that the inhabitants of it should be obliged to seek refuge in the desert, in dry and sandy places. See Isai. xv. 9. Houbigant renders it, And sit in disgrace. The places mentioned in the following verses were cities and towns of Moab.*

*Ver. 26. Moab also shall wallow] And clap at Moab in his vomiting, that he also may become an object of derision.*

*Ver. 27. For was not Israel a derision] Houbigant renders the verse thus; For was not Israel a derision to thee, and wast thou not found with those who made songs upon him? How didst thou speak of him! how didst thou shake the head!*

*Ver. 28. In the sides of the hole's mouth] By the sides of the pit's mouth: that is, on the edge of the precipice. The mouth of the pit is the same as the brink of destruction, the pit or grave yawning wide, as it were, ready to swallow one up. And the image is peculiarly striking, when a person from the side of a steep rock looks down into a deep gulph below. The Moabites are exhorted to retire for safety to such places, where the apprehensions of danger would secure them from the enemy's pursuit. That doves build in the clefts or natural hollows of a rock, see Cant. ii. 14. Dr. Shaw in his Travels, p. 162. fol. mentions a city on the African coast, called *Hamam-et*, from the number of wild pigeons (*Hamam*) that are bred in the cliffs of the adjacent mountains.*

*Ver. 30. I know] I know, saith JEHOVAH, his fierce wrath;*

31. Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab; *mine heart shall mourn for the men of Kir-heres.*

32 O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer: thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach *even* to the sea of Jazer: the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer-fruits and upon thy vintage.

33 And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the wine-presses: none shall tread with shouting; *their shouting shall be no shouting.*

34 From the cry of Heshbon *even* unto Elealeh, and *even* unto Jahaz, have they uttered their voice, from Zoar *even* unto Hononaim, as an heifer of three years old: for the waters also of Nimrim shall be desolate.

35 Moreover, I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the LORD, him that offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incense to his gods.

36 Therefore mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and mine heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kir-heres: because the riches *that* he hath gotten are perished.

37 For every head *shall be* bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands *shall be* cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth.

38 *There shall be* lamentation generally upon all the house-tops of Moab, and in the streets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure, saith the LORD.

39 They shall howl, *saying*, How is it

broken down! how hath Moab turned the back with shame! so shall Moab be a derision and a dismaying to all them about him.

40 For thus saith the LORD; Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab.

41 Kerioth is taken, and the strong holds are surpris'd, and the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

42 And Moab shall be destroyed from *being* a people, because he hath magnified *himself* against the LORD.

43 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, *shall be* upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the LORD.

44 He that fleeth from the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring upon it, *even* upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

45 They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon, because of the force: but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones.

46 Woe be unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth: for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives.

47 ¶ Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the LORD. Thus far *is* the judgment of Moab.

wrath; but he is not alike in the extent of his ability, he is not alike in performing. See Vitrina on Isai. xvi. 6.

Ver. 32. *Even to the sea of Jazer*] Unto Jazer have they extended.

Ver. 33. *Their shouting shall be no shouting*] The shouting will not be a shouting; or will be a very different shouting.

Ver. 36. *Therefore, &c.*] The music of pipes was used at funerals. See Sir Norton Knatchbull's notes on Matt. ix. 23. See Isai. xvi. 11. Galen compares the hoarse and dead sound of the bowels when they are empty to that of the flutes used at funerals. See lib. iii. de Syntomat. Causis.

Ver. 43, 44. *Fear*] Terror.

Ver. 45. *They that fled, &c.*] But stand ye under the shadow of Heshbon, and confide in it: for a fire shall burst forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, which shall devour the hairs of Moab, and the necks of the sons of

pride. Houbigant. See Numb. xxi. 28. to which Jeremiah refers in this part of his prophecy.

Ver. 47. *Yet will I bring again, &c.*] The Moabites were afterwards restored to their country, as appears from Josephus. Antiq. lib. xiii. cap. 17. But these and similar promises of mercy, after judgment, are chiefly to be understood of the conversion of the Gentiles under the Gospel, and at last the bringing in the fulness of them, called in the prophets *the latter days*. The conversion of idolaters is expressed by returning from their captivity. Ezek. xvi. 53. See Lowth, and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The destruction of Moab. The Lord of Hosts, who hath all the armies of heaven and earth at his beck, sends forth spoilers, whose sword shall devour around, and pursue the fugitives. Desolation shall be spread on every side, every

## C H A P. XLIX.

*The judgment of the Ammonites: their restoration. The judgment of Edom, of Damascus, of Kedar, of Hazor, and of Elam. The restoration of Elam.*

[Before Christ 599.]

**C**ONCERNING the Ammonites, thus saith the LORD; Hath Israel no sons?

hath he no heir? why *then* doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities?

2 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters

every city be destroyed; *there shall be no more praise of Moab, the place and people utterly ruined, every fruitful valley wasted, the land left without inhabitant, the princes and priests shall go into captivity; and, with confusion, they shall behold their idol Chemosh, their confidence, share their fate, unable as the calf of Bethel to defend his votaries.* In vain they cry, *Flee*, when flight is impossible, or perhaps this is the call of the prophet, ironically deriding their attempt to escape from city to city, when all must fall, and *no city shall escape.* The cry of 'Horonaim taken,' echoes; and, while the fugitives go weeping up the ascent to Luhith, the enemies hear their cry, and follow at their heels. Swift the destruction passes through, as the bird cuts the air; and as on eagles' wings they are hurried into captivity. *Moab throughout is destroyed, and desolate, like the heath in the wilderness, not even the infants are spared; nor can their cries avail.* The charge is given, and sealed with an anathema; *Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood, and no pleas of pity must be heard, when vengeance from God is to be executed.* *Note;* (1.) When God's work is given us to do, of whatever kind, to act hypocritically or negligently will bring his curse upon our heads. (2.) The vain confidence of sinners will as much disappoint their hopes in the day of trial, as Chemosh shamed his foolish votaries.

2. The cause of this destruction is their pride and carnal security. Like wine which has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, Moab had been at ease from the days when they were formed into a people, and had never known such captivities as Israel had undergone. Strong as wine settled on its lees, filled with wealth, and confident with long prosperity, they despised danger, *trusting in their works, their fortifications, or their idol-deities, the work of their own hands, and in their treasures, as if these were a sure defence; though the event must so fearfully disappoint their expectations, their works be demolished, their treasures and their gods together spoiled and carried off by the conquerors.* *Note;* (1.) Worldly prosperity is a dangerous snare to the soul. (2.) God's enemies often enjoy here below that worldly ease and affluence to which his own people are strangers. They have their good things here, and have nothing to hope for in eternity. (3.) Creature confidence in the day of evil proves utter vanity and vexation of spirit. (4.) The sinner's presumption is the prelude to his ruin.

2dly, The destruction of Moab is more largely painted, with the sins, the cause of her calamities.

1. The destruction is terrible, sudden, universal, near, irreparable, drawn in the strongest colours, if so be it might awaken a sense of danger, and be the means of leading to

repentance any of that devoted people. They thought themselves secure in warlike hosts, able to repel any invader; but Moab is spoiled, her cities universally taken, her people captives, the flower of her youth fallen by the sword, sent by that Lord of Hosts whose power none can resist, and from whose arm none can fly: near, even at the door, is the fearful judgment, and time it is for all around her to begin the lamentation over her, *How is the strong staff broken?* on which they trusted for support, or had been lifted up with terror: *and the beautiful rod, the kingdom once so splendid, is overturned; so poor and perishing are all human excellencies.* Hurlled from the summit of glory, her strongest holds shall be laid in the dust by the Chaldean spoiler, and the people reduced to the greatest extremities; while they who dwell in the utmost border, shall with solicitous eagerness inquire of the fugitives *What is done?* and shall in answer hear, that all is in confusion, their case desperate, their fortresses destroyed, their country wasted, their power broken; and for this are called upon to *howl and cry.* Drunk with the cup of God's fury, Moab is become weak and sick, *swallowing in his vomit;* a loathsome spectacle, a derision to the beholders. Like a dove that flies to the cleft of the rock, the prophet calls on the inhabitants to quit their cities, and take refuge in some solitary cave, where they may be hid. With deepest signs of most expressive woe, the people are enjoined to lament their desolations, and with sympathetic tenderness the prophet mingles his tears with theirs, affected deeply with the terrible scene that he beheld. All gladness is banished, their harvest and vintage a prey to the spoiler, and nothing heard around but shrieks and groans, the universal ruin spreading an universal lamentation. They can neither fly nor fight; for, swift as an eagle darteth on his prey, the Babylonian conqueror advances. Their fortresses are scaled, their mighty men sunk under panic fear, every effort to escape fruitless: they who attempt to avoid one evil, shall plunge into another; and, since the judgment is from God, and the appointed time come, it is vain to hope for deliverance. Even under the shadow of Heshbon, where they hoped at least to find some protection, the fire of the Chaldeans shall devour them, and the *crown of the head of the tumultuous ones, their nobles and great men, who boasted of their wealth and strength, be laid low.* Woe, therefore, to miserable Moab, *the people of Chemosh perisheth, finding no protection from their God. Thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives, and the land left desolate without inhabitant.*

2. Their sins are many and exceedingly aggravated, and in these his judgments God is altogether righteous. [1.] *Insufferable pride,* where a variety of expressions are used to

intimate

shall be burned with fire : then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD.

3 Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled : cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird ye with sackcloth ; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges ; for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together.

4 Wherefore gloriest thou in the vallies, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter ? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me ?

5 Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the LORD God of Hosts, from all those that be about thee ; and ye shall be driven out every man right forth ; and none shall gather up him that wandereth.

6 ¶ And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD.

7 ¶ Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of Hosts ; Is wisdom no more in Teman ? is counsel perished from the prudent ? is their wisdom vanished ?

intimate in how many instances and how deeply it appeared ; and wherever this spirit is found, there for ever the curse of God will rest. [2.] *Contempt of God*, as if they were above his arm, and defied his threatenings. [3.] *Unkindness to God's people* ; they mocked at their calamities, derided them when led captive, as if they had been thieves taken in the fact, and expressed a malicious pleasure in their miseries. *Note* ; Nothing is more hateful to God than such a diabolical temper ; and those who mock at the sufferings of God's people, God will mock at when their fear cometh. [4.] *Wrath and slander*. They instigated, probably, the Chaldeans to extirpate the Jewish people, and by their lies sought to exasperate them ; but, saith God, *I know it*, and *it shall not be so* : he sees the devices of the crafty, will disappoint the enemies of his church, and reckon with them for their malignity. [5.] *Their idolatry* : because they burnt incense to their false gods, and preferred Chemosh before the living Jehovah. For these things God will visit them, and be avenged of such a nation as this.

3. A gracious promise concludes the whole, and gives one ray of hope to prevent utter despair. *Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord* ; which had a temporal accomplishment, when, with the other captive nations, they were released by Cyrus ; and has respect to those more blessed days, when Moab should, with other Gentiles, submit to the Messiah's kingdom, be delivered from the bondage of Satan, sin, and death, and rejoice in that liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free.

#### C H A P. XLIX.

*Ver. 1. Concerning the Ammonites* ] The evils here foretold happened about the same time with those spoken of in the preceding chapter ; that is to say, about five years after the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Ammon and Moab are generally joined together, as they were united by blood, by interest, and by vicinity. Instead of *their king*, here, and in ver. 3. Houbigant reads *Malkam*, the idol of the Ammonites. God greatly afflicted those parts of the kingdom of Israel which lay on the east side of Jordan, first, by Hazael, then by Tiglath-pileser ; and afterwards delivered up the whole kingdom to be carried away captive by Salmanezar. Soon after which time, it is probable, the Ammonites possessed themselves of Gad, or of Gilead, which belonged to that tribe, and lay near their

territories. See Amos, i. 13. But God's dispossessing the Israelites gave them no right to invade their inheritance, especially when they had been so tender of the Ammonites, as not to invade their possessions in their march towards the land of Canaan. See Deut. ii. 19. Judg. xi. 12. The reason which engaged Nebuchadnezzar to declare war against the Ammonites, was evidently to revenge the death of Gedaliah, who was killed by the order of Baalis king of the Ammonites. See chap. xl. 14. and Calmet.

*Ver. 2. Rabbah of the Ammonites* ] A capital city of that country. Her daughters mean the smaller cities or villages.

*Then shall Israel be heir, &c.* ] This is understood to have been fulfilled, when Judas Maccabeus defeated the Ammonites, and took their towns, 1 Mac. v. 6, &c. Zephaniah speaks in like manner, ch. ii. 9. *The residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.* But both prophets may perhaps refer to still future times, when Israel shall be finally restored to their own land, as is frequently foretold of them, and not only recover their own ancient possessions, but succeed likewise to the vacant possessions of their once hostile neighbours, long before extinct and irrecoverably lost.

*Ver. 3. Howl, O Heshbon* ] That is, "When Ai, a city of Ammon, is destroyed, it is time for Heshbon, the chief city of Moab, to lament her danger." The author of the *Observations* remarks, that the phrase, *Run to and fro by the hedges*, should rather be understood and rendered, *Run—by the garden-walls*. Their places of burial in the east are without their cities, as well as their gardens ; and consequently their going to them must often be by the garden-walls. The ancient warriors of distinction who were slain in battle, were wont to be carried to the sepulchres of their fathers, as appears from the cases of Josiah, Ahab, and Afahel ; and they often go, to weep over the graves of those whom they would honour, especially at first ; Observations which, put together, sufficiently account for this passage. See p. 221.

*Ver. 4. Thy flowing valley* ] *Valley of Anakim*. Houbigant renders the verse, *Wherefore dost thou glory in thy valleys ? Thy valley is spoiled, O backsliding daughter, who didst trust, &c.*

*Ver. 7. Concerning Edom* ] This prophecy respecting Edom refers to the same time with those preceding. See Obad. ver. 8, &c. Teman was a city in Edom, the inhabitants



8 Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time *that* I will visit him.

9 If grape-gatherers come to thee, would they not leave *some* gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough.

10 But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not.

11 Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve *them* alive; and let thy widows trust in me.

12 For thus saith the LORD; Behold, they whose judgment *was* not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken; and *art* thou he *that* shall altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink *of it*.

13 For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation,

a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.

14 I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, *saying*, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle.

15 For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, *and* despised among men.

16 Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, *and* the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD.

17 Also Edom shall be a desolation; every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss *at* all the plagues thereof.

18 As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour *cities* thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.

19 Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make

habitants whereof were famous for their wisdom. See Job, ii. 11.

*Ver. 8. Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan*] See the note on ver. 30. The Dedanites were descended from Dedan, a grandson of Abraham, and settled in Arabia. Houbigant renders the last clause of this verse, *For I am about to bring ruin upon Esau, or Edom: I will bring upon him the time of vengeance.*

*Ver. 9, 10. If grape-gatherers come, &c.*] *When the grape-gatherers shall come to thee, they will leave no grapes; when nightly thieves, they will plunder as much as seems good to them; ver. 10. So will I exhaust Esau; I will open his treasures; nothing shall be hid: His seed shall be spoiled, and his brethren, together with his neighbours; and he shall not be.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 11. Leave thy fatherless children*] This is understood by many to be an irony. See Isai. xvi. 4. But there is nothing in the context, says Houbigant, which can lead to this interpretation. I rather understand it as a prophecy; nor was it any thing wonderful that the conquerors should spare the little children and widows, from whom they had nothing to fear; nor that the Edomites should forsake both the one and the other, when compelled to a precipitate flight.

*Ver. 12. Behold, they whose judgment, &c.*] That is, the Jews; who, in all human appearance, might have expected favour at God's hand, in regard to the gracious promises made to them and to their fathers. See chap. xxv. 29.

*Ver. 14. I have heard a rumour, &c.*] The prophets

frequently represent God as a mighty monarch, summoning nations, and sending them where he will, to execute his orders. See Isai. xiii. 2. xviii. 3. The Chaldeans are here referred to.

*Ver. 15. Small, &c.*] *Behold, I have made thee of small account among the nations, contemptible among the men of whom thou art horribly afraid.*

*Ver. 16. Thy terribleness, &c.*] "Thou hast been formerly terrible to all about thee; the confidence thou hast in thy strength, hath rendered thee careless and secure, and given thine enemies an advantage over thee." We learn from St. Jerome, who lived in the neighbourhood, that Idumæa was a rocky mountainous country, and that many of the inhabitants dwelt in caves dug out of the rocks and hills. See chap. i. 53. Amos, ix. 2.

*Ver. 19. Behold, &c.*] Maundrell, speaking of the Jordan, says, that the bank of the river is so beset with bushes and trees, such as tamarisks, willows, oleanders, that you can see no water till you have made your way through them. In this thicket anciently (and the same is reported of it at this very day) several sorts of wild beasts were wont to harbour themselves, who being washed out of their covert by the overflowings of the river, gave occasion to the allusion here and ch. l. 44. See his Journey from Aleppo, p. 82. and Bishop Lowth's 6th Prelection. Nebuchadrezzar and his army are pointed out by this similitude. Houbigant and Schultens render this verse, *And I will make him dart out thence, and run.* Instead of, *The habitation of the strong*, Houbigant reads, *Upon the ancient pastures*; and the latter part of the verse, *What chosen soldier*

A a

will

him, run away from her: and who *is* a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who *is* like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who *is* that shepherd that will stand before me?

20 Therefore, hear the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them.

21 The earth is moved at the noise of their fall, at the cry the noise thereof was heard in the Red Sea.

22 Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

23 ¶ Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad: for they have heard evil tidings: they are faint-hearted; *there is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet.*

24 Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her:

anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail.

25 How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy!

26 Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD of Hosts.

27 And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.

28 ¶ Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon shall finite, thus saith the LORD; Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east.

29 Their tents and their flocks shall they take away: they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they shall cry unto them, *Fear is on every side.*

30 ¶ Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the LORD; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you.

*will defend thee? For who is like me, or who will dare to stir me up, or where is that shepherd who can stand before me? The word shepherd is used in opposition to the lion before mentioned; as if he had said, "A shepherd may as well encounter a lion, as the best-accounted warrior contend against the Almighty, or those whom he makes the instruments of his vengeance." See Calmet, and Lowth.*

*Ver. 20. Surely the least of the flock shall draw them] Surely the tender lambs of the flock shall be carried away; their pastures shall be laid waste even in their presence. Houbigant. Others, by the least of the flock, understand the common soldiers in the Chaldean army; "any one of whom (says the prophet) shall have sufficient strength and courage to defeat the Idumæan forces."*

*Ver. 23. Concerning Damascus] Damascus was the capital of the kingdom of Syria, and had seemingly at this time swallowed up all the other petty sovereignties of that country. Isaiah had before uttered a prophesy concerning it of a calamitous import, ch. xvii. which had been fulfilled by Tiglath-pileser's taking it, and carrying the people captives to Kir, 2 Kings, xvi. 9. Amos also had foretold the same event, ch. i. 3—5. But it had recovered itself after the fall of the Assyrian empire, and is here doomed to suffer again the like calamities from the resentment of Nebuchadrezzar, probably about the same time with the other neighbouring nations.*

*Hamath, &c.] Hamath and Arpad are often joined together. Hamath was a frontier town lying on the bor-*

*ders of Judæa towards Syria; thence called the entrance of Hamath. Arpad is otherwise called Arphad, the habitation of the Arvadites. Gen. x. 18. Instead of, There is sorrow on the sea, Houbigant reads, They fluctuate as the sea; they cannot be at rest. Comp. Isai. lviii. 20.*

*There is sorrow on the sea, &c.] נִמְגוּ בַיָּם דֵּאָגָה namgu baiim deagah. They are melted in a sea of solicitude. This is a literal translation of the text, and appears to me preferable in sense to any of the interpretations which I have hitherto met with.*

*Ver. 25. How is the city of praise not left] A city of praise, is a city of fame and renown: compare chap. xxxiii. 9. li. 41. and Isai. lxii. 7. This is spoken in the person of the king, or some inhabitant of Damascus, bewailing the lot of so famous and pleasant a city. Houbigant renders the verb, How shall I leave a city which is my glory, a city which is so delightful to me?*

*Ver. 27. The palaces of Ben-hadad] The name of several kings of Syria. See 1 Kings, xv. 18, &c.*

*Ver. 28. Concerning Kedar, &c.] The kingdoms whose metropolis is Hazor or Petra; so called, according to Strabo, because it is guarded by a πέτρα, or rock, on all sides. See Vitringa on Isai. xxi. 13. and Gen. xxv. 13.*

*Ver. 29. Their curtains] Their skins or tents.*

*Ver. 30. Dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor] When the Arabs have drawn upon themselves so general a resentment of the more fixed inhabitants of those countries, that they think themselves unable to stand against them, they withdraw into the depths of the great wilderness, where*

none

31 Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the LORD, which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone.

32 And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil: and I will scatter into all winds them that are in the utmost corners; and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, saith the LORD.

33 And Hazor shall be a dwelling for dra-

gons, and a desolation for ever: there shall no man abide there, nor any son of man dwell in it.

34 ¶ The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying,

35 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might.

none can follow them with hope of success. This appears by a passage in Maillet's Letters, (Let. i. p. 24.) and is confirmed by other writers: D'Arvieux particularly informs us, that the Arabs will be ready to decamp in less than two hours' warning, and, retiring immediately into the deserts, render it impossible for other nations, even the most powerful, to conquer them, they not daring to venture far into deserts where the Arabs alone know how to steer their course, so as to hit upon places of water and forage. Is it not then most probable, that the dwelling deep which Jeremiah here recommends to the Arab tribes, means this plunging far into the deserts; rather than the going into deep caves and dens, as Grotius and other commentators suppose? That way of endeavouring to avoid the fury of an enemy was indeed practised, not only before the days of our prophet, as appears from Judg. vi. 2. 1 Sam. xiii. 6. but long after, as we learn from the croifade writers: but those learned men will find it extremely difficult, I believe, to produce any passages which shew, that the Arabs, who live in tents, were wont to look upon this as a proper method for them to take: their way is to retire far into the deserts, not into the bowels of the earth; and so far are they from making caves their refuge, that it is observed of this nation, that when they possess cities and palaces, they never will dwell in them, looking upon such places rather as traps, than as places of defence, as in similar cases they were looked upon anciently. See Sandys' Travels, p. 158. La Roque Voy. dans la Pal. p. 111. and 1 Sam. xxiii. 7. Wherever the croifade writers speak of retiring into caves to avoid danger, it is of a people who lived a settled kind of life, not a sitting one in tents, like that of the Arabs. That the Hazor, which is here directed to get far off, and to dwell deep, was a nation that lived in tents, appears from this very passage. "Arise," said Nebuchadrezzar to his people, when he conceived a purpose against Hazor, "Get ye up to the wealthy nation which dwelleth without care, which have neither gates nor bars; which dwell alone:" a plain description of the Bedouin way of living; and therefore this dwelling deep hardly admits of any other meaning, if we would interpret the Scriptures from eastern customs. I cannot but observe further, that the words which the prophet uses, perfectly agree with this explication; Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, &c. The caves to which the eastern people have been wont to retire are in their very towns, or in the neighbourhood of their dwelling at least, and not far off. Such was that which Afa made, chap. xli. 7. 9. As the same term of dwelling deep is applied to the Dedanites, ver. 8. it is reasonable

to suppose that they also were a tribe of Arabs who lived in tents. The learned, from other considerations, have said the same thing. See Vitringa on Isai. xxi. 13. This sense of the original word, according to which deep is used for far off, seems to be confirmed by other passages: Deeply revolting from God, Isai. xxxi. 6. signifies departing far from him. See the Observations, p. 59.

Ver. 31. Arise, &c.] The prophet gives the Chaldeans a commission from God to undertake this expedition, and seize upon the wealth of the inhabitants of Kedar; who are described from their peculiarity of living in tents in the wilderness.

Ver. 34. Against Elam] Concerning Elam. Elam we find to have been an independent kingdom in the days of Abraham. Gen. xiv. 1. But I am not of opinion with those writers, who hold that by Elam in Scripture Persia is always meant. There is no doubt but that, when the monarchy of Persia was established under Cyrus, Elam was blended into, and formed a part of it. But before that time Elam and Persia were two distinct kingdoms; of which this may be admitted for proof, that the kingdom of Persia, if Xenophon may be credited as an historian, was never subdued under the dominion of Nebuchadrezzar, but preserved its liberty in alliance with the Medes. Elam, on the contrary, is not only here prophesied of, as destined to become a part of the Babylonian conquests, but is actually spoken of, Dan. viii. 2. as a province of the Babylonish empire over which Daniel seems to have presided, having Shushan for the seat of his government. We may therefore conclude Elam to have been, as the name itself would lead us to suppose, the country called by heathen writers *Elmais*, which Pliny, in conformity with Daniel, describes as separated from Susiana by the river *Eulaus*, or *Ulay*; Nat. Hist. lib. vi. cap. 31. Strabo also gives it the same situation, and in two places mentions the wars that it had carried on with the Susians and Babylonians. Lib. xi. p. 524. lib. xvi. p. 744. Shushan, or Susa, was, properly speaking, the capital of Susiana; but it is likely, that when the Babylonians in conjunction with the Susians conquered Elam, they might have annexed it to the government of Susiana, and so the provinces united might have gone indifferently by the name of either Elam or Susiana. If so, Abradates, whom Xenophon styles king of the Susians, and who in the course of the war between the Babylonians and Medes revolted from the former, and joined the latter with his forces (Xenophon. Cyropæd. lib. vi.) had Elam likewise, as well as Susiana, for his kingdom or government, conferred upon him by Ne-

36 And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come.

37 For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life: and I will bring evil upon them, *even* my fierce anger, saith the LORD;

and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them:

38 And I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the LORD.

39 ¶ But it shall come to pass in the latter days *that* I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD.

buchadrezzar, who is said to have had an affection for him; and his revolt from the son of his benefactor will help us to account for the forces of Elam being joined with Media in besieging Babylon, as foretold by Isaiah, ch. xxi. 2. while the province or country itself may have still remained in the hands of the king of Babylon, who may have entrusted Daniel with the administration of it; till on the final subversion of the Babylonish monarchy it was restored again to its former possessors, who had fought under the banners of the Medes and Persians; as is intimated ver. 39.

Ver. 36. *Upon Elam will I bring the four winds*] That is, enemies from every quarter. The Elamites before their deliverance by Cyrus were in very hard servitude, and dispersed into different countries, to avoid the evils under which they groaned in their own country.

Ver. 38. *And I will set my throne in Elam*] "Nebuchadrezzar shall place his throne in Elam in token of his intire conquest of that country." See chap. i. 15. xliii. 10. This is called *God's throne*, as Nebuchadrezzar is called *his servant*. See chap. xxvii. 6, 7. and Lowth.

Ver. 39. *I will bring again, &c.*] When the Lord had resolved to destroy the monarchy of the Chaldeans, he inspired Cyrus with those great designs which he afterwards so successfully executed: who began with setting free his own country; then the Persians and Elamites; subdued all the people who inhabited the countries round, and founded the monarchy of the Persians. Then the Persians and Elamites were re-united under Cyrus, and became the masters of the east. See Calmet and Blayney.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The doom of the Ammonites is now read.

1. The charges against them are, [1.] *Illegal seizure of God's heritage*. When the king of Assyria subdued and led captive the Gileadites, they immediately took possession of their territories as their own, as if there were no Israelites remaining to inherit the possessions of their brethren. *Note*; They who are weak will often be oppressed; but there is a day coming when judgment shall sit, and justice be impartially administered. [2.] *Apostacy of God*. Lot, their father, had transmitted to them the worship of the true God, but they had quickly revolted to idols. [3.] *Their vain confidence*; they gloried in their vallies flowing with plenty, and in their treasures; as if, by these secured, they could defy their enemies. But they who depart from God have little reason to promise themselves security and ease in their sins.

2. Their judgment is pronounced. The alarm of war

is founded; their invaders are sent from God to spoil and destroy; their cities are burnt with fire; their cries go up; in vain they fly for shelter *to the bedges*; their kings, priests, and princes together are seized, and led into captivity, and the remnant dispersed, and find no favour among the nations whither they wander. Then shall Israel obtain reprisals, seize their country, *and be heir unto them that were his heirs*, which was fulfilled, 1 Mac. v. 6. and may perhaps have some respect to the days of the Messiah, Isai. xi. 14.

3. A promise of restoration is added. *Afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon*; temporally, restoring them again to their own land; or spiritually, at the coming of Christ, converting them, and bringing them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

2dly, Edom, in the day of Israel's calamity, cried, *Raise it, raise it, even to the foundation thereof*. Psa. cxxxvii. 7. the cup therefore is next put into her hand. We have,

1. The terrible destruction of the Edomites. The calamity of Esau approaches, the day of their visitation; the inhabitants of Dedan are called upon to flee, and dwell in the depths of the wilderness, to save their lives from the destroyers. The most careful grape-gatherers leave some berries; and the thieves, who break in at night, know when they have enough, and make off; but *Edom* is stripped *bare*; nor can all his care to conceal his wealth, keep it from the spoiler, or the secret lurking-places hide the fugitives: his children are destroyed, and his neighbours, so far from helping, share his fate; so that, in the day of his affliction, none of them are left to say, *Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me*; though others consider these words in a contrary sense; and some as a gracious promise to a remnant of Edom who should be turned unto God; and his people, in every time of distress, may with comfort apply them to themselves. Less guilty nations than Edom have drank of the cup, therefore he may not expect to escape unpunished. By an oath, to confirm the immutability of his counsel concerning them, God hath sworn that Bozrah, the capital, and all the other cities, shall become a curse, a reproach, and perpetual desolation, lying in ruinous heaps, without inhabitant, as the cities of Sodom. At God's secret instigation, the Chaldeans, as if invited by an ambassador, come up as to a certain victory; and, depopulated and impoverished, the Edomites shall become a vile and despicable people. For, though dwelling in fortresses which appear impregnable as the craggy rock, God's almighty arm is able and determined to bring them to the dust. With astonishment passengers behold, and

hifs,

## C H A P. L.

*The judgment of Babylon. The redemption of Israel.*

[Before Christ 595.]

**T**HE word that the LORD spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.

hifs, insulting their fearful fall. As a lion, driven from his covert on the banks of Jordan by the rising flood, tears and devours the defenceless sheep, so shall the king of Babylon go up against the habitation of the strong, and Edom shall suddenly flee: or rather it should be rendered, *I will cause him* (Nebuchadnezzar) *to run upon it suddenly*, and subdue the country, appointing a deputy over it from among his captains; *for who is like me?* saith the Lord, able to execute all my purposes, *and who will appoint me the time* to dispute the battle, or retard the fulfilment of my counsels, *and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?* what king can defend his subjects against the power of the Almighty Jehovah? Therefore, since such is his decree to destroy Edom, the meanest foldier of the Chaldean army shall be sufficient to conquer the mightiest Edomite, and drag them from their lurking-holes. Amazed at their fall, the earth trembles, or echoes, with the shout of the conquerors, and the cries of the vanquished; the sound of which reaches the distant shores.

2. All their efforts to help themselves will be vain. Their boasted wisdom now shall fail them, and all their schemes prove abortive. And their terribleness, their mighty armies, and strong fortresses, which in the pride of their hearts they thought invincible, shall deceive them; when, swift as an eagle, the destroyer shall come up against them, and invest their capital. These terrible warriors, frightened, as a woman in the pangs of travail, should abandon themselves to despair, and fall an easy prey; or *thy terribleness*, which some render *thine idol*, be a vain protection in the day of their calamity. *Note*; When God strikes, the strong men must bow themselves; for there is neither counsel nor might against the Lord.

3dly, Syria, with Damascus the capital, and the other chief cities, are next brought to the bar, and doomed to a terrible overthrow. No sooner are the tidings heard of the victorious armies of Babylon approaching, than instant confusion and terrors seize the inhabitants of the land. The anguish spreads to the most distant border of the sea; or, like its troubled waves, so restless are the inhabitants, and uneasy. Instead of resistance, the citizens of Damascus, affrighted as a woman in the pangs of travail, place all their hopes in flight. *How is the city of praise*, so famous once, *not left or spared*, but ruined by the Chaldean enemy; *the city of my joy?* Either the prophet admired its beauty, or her king lamented her ruins, her young men fallen, her warriors slain, her walls razed, her palaces burnt to the ground. God's wrath hath kindled the flames, and none can quench them. *Note*; (1.) They who place their joy in earthly comforts will be punished with greater bitterness in the loss of them. (2.) When God has a controversy with a nation, he can easily dispirit the bravest, and make the strong men feeble.

2 Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.

4thly, Kedar was a son of Ishmael; his descendant settled in Arabia; Hazor or Petra was the capital, and had other tributary kingdoms under it; though others suppose that some of the Hazorites, who escaped in the days of Joshua fled hither, and built a city of the same name with that which they had deserted.

Nebuchadnezzar is invited to come and spoil this *wealthy nation*, or rather this *nation living at ease, and dwelling without care*, in peace and security, unprepared to repel an invader; which *have neither gates nor bars, nor dwelling in cities, but alone*, separate from other nations, and in tents roving from place to place. Their curtains, vessels, camels, and flocks, wherein their riches chiefly consisted, are given for a prey. Unable to resist the arms of the conqueror, or countermince his purposes, they are called upon to flee; and, scattered on every side, their deserted country is ravaged; and their capital, in ruins, becomes no longer the abode of men, but of wild beasts for ever. *Note*; (1.) They who are most secure, are not therefore most safe. (2.) The most inoffensive have no guard against the ravages of ambition and covetousness.

5thly, Elam, which is also concerned in this prophecy, which is dated in the beginning of Zedekiah's reign, is supposed not to be Persia at large, but a country nearer Judæa, called Elymais, some of whose inhabitants served under Sennacherib, king of Assyria, at the siege of Jerusalem, Isa. xxii. 6. It was afterwards subdued by Nebuchadnezzar, and the kings of Babylon sometimes made it the seat of their residence, Dan. viii. 2.

1. Universal destruction is threatened. God undertakes to *break their bow*, and to *disable the chief of their might*, and then they must fall an easy prey. By the Chaldean army they shall be dispersed into the four corners of the earth, as fugitives or captives, 'Terrors shall seize them, the sword devour them, the wrath of God pursue them, and therein all evil is comprehended; nor shall the king and princes thereof escape, but fall in the promiscuous ruin; and the conqueror shall erect his throne in Elam, which may well be called the throne of God, by whose power and gift he obtained the dominion.

2. A gracious promise is given them of restoration, which under Cyrus was accomplished in a measure; but was more eminently fulfilled when, by the preaching of the Gospel, the Elamites, among other nations, were called into the church, and into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, Acts, ii. 9.

## C H A P. L.

*Ver. 1. The word that the Lord spake against Babylon* After having announced to the Philistines, Edomites, and other people, the evils which they should suffer from Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah proceeds to foretel what should

3 For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.

4 ¶ In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go and seek the LORD their God.

5 They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, *saying*, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant *that* shall not be forgotten.

6 My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away *on* the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place.

7 All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not: because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice; even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.

8 Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks.

9 ¶ For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows *shall* be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.

10 And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the LORD.

11 Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of mine heritage, because ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls;

12 Your mother shall be sore confounded; she that bare you shall be ashamed: behold, the hindermost of the nations *shall* be a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert.

13 Because of the wrath of the LORD, it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues.

happen to the Chaldeans themselves from Cyrus and other princes his successors. For the fullest explication of this prophecy, the reader will refer to Isaiah on the same subject; bearing in mind that the prophecy has a further respect to that mystical Babylon mentioned in *Revelation*; many expressions of it being applied by St. John in that book. *Merodach*, mentioned in the next verse, seems to have been one of the idol-gods of Babylon; perhaps a deified king.

*Ver. 3. Out of the north there cometh up a nation*] The Medes, who lay north of Babylon. See ver. 9. 41. These people are well and fully described in the subsequent verses.

*Ver. 4. In those days, and in that time*] The return of the ten tribes with that of Judah and Benjamin could not have been marked out more expressly. "They shall return to their country amid tears of joy, of tenderness and compunction." See Calmet. But from the next verse we may conclude, that a future and more general restoration of the Jews is also and particularly referred to. See Luke, ix. 51, 53. Jer. xlii. 17. xlii. 12.

*Ver. 6. Their shepherds—have turned them away*] They have turned them aside from the true worship of God performed at Jerusalem, to sacrifice to idols upon the mountains and high-places. See chap. ii. 20. iii. 23.

*Ver. 7. Their adversaries said, We offend not*] "In making them captives." Jeremiah introduces the Chaldean speaking thus by the truest prosopopœia; for it could not be but the Chaldeans must have known those things which the

prophets had foretold concerning the future captivity of the Jews: Nebuchadrezzar himself is a witness, who gave his captains orders to preserve Jeremiah. See Houbigant.

*Ver. 8. Be as the he-goats before the flocks*] "Let each of the princes of Judah endeavour to lead the way to others, and give them an example of speedily obeying God's call, without shewing any fondness to the place, or to the idolatries there practised." See Zech. x. 3. Homer frequently compares his heroes to *rams, bulls,* and *he-goats*.

*Ver. 10. All that spoil her shall be satisfied*] "They shall fully revenge themselves upon her, and have as much spoil and plunder as they can desire."

*Ver. 12. Behold, &c.*] *Behold, she shall be the hindermost of the nations, a wilderness, &c.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 13. Because of the wrath of the Lord, it shall not be inhabited*] See *Isai. xlii. 19.* to which the following remarkable passage from Rollin's *Ancient History*, vol. ii. book iv. may be added: "After its capture by Cyrus, Babylon ceased to be a royal city; the kings of Persia choosing some other place for their residence. The Macedonians, who succeeded the Persians, did not only neglect it, but built Seleucia in its neighbourhood, on purpose to draw away its inhabitants, and caused it to be deserted: the new kings of Persia completed its ruin by building Ctesiphon, which carried away all the remainder of its inhabitants. She was so totally forsaken, that, in the time of Pausanias, nothing remained but the bare walls. The kings of Persia, finding the place deserted, converted

14 Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she hath sinned against the LORD.

15 Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her.

16 Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land.

17 ¶ Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones.

18 Therefore, thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria.

19 And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead.

20 In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

21 ¶ Go up against the land of Merathaim, even against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod: waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the LORD, and do according to all that I have commanded thee.

22 A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction.

23 How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!

24 I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the LORD.

“converted it into a park, chase, or menagerie, in which they kept wild beasts for hunting. But it was still too much that the walls of Babylon were standing: at length they fell down in several places, and never were repaired. The animals which were kept for the pleasure of the Persian monarchs, abandoned the place, and were succeeded by serpents and scorpions. In the time of Alexander the Great, the river had quitted its ordinary channel by means of the sluices made by Cyrus; which sluices and outlets being ill-stopped, had occasioned a great inundation, and the place where Babylon stood was covered by an inaccessible pool. By all these changes Babylon became an absolute desert, and all the country round fell into the same state of horror and desolation; so that the most able geographers at this day cannot ascertain the place where it stood.”

Ver. 15. *She hath given her hand*] Giving the hand, is a token of consenting to any conditions offered. See 2 Kings, x. 15. and Lam. v. 6. *Dare manus*, (to give the hand,) in Latin signifies, to yield; and most probably alludes to the act of the vanquished, who, throwing down his arms, and stretching forth his defenceless hands, acknowledges himself to be in the victor's power.

Ver. 16. *Cut off the sower from Babylon*] Babylon resembled a country walled in, rather than a city; the walls, according to Herodotus, being sixty miles in compass. Within this large circuit a great deal of ground was cultivated with corn; so that enough grew within the walls to support the inhabitants during a long siege. Others understand by Babylon here, not the city only, but the

whole province: the latter part of the verse is spoken of the Babylonish allies. See Isai xiii. 14.

Ver. 17. *Israel is a scattered sheep*] See ver. 6. “As a lion coming among a flock of sheep scatters them one from another; so have these foreign invaders served my people.” See chap. ii. 15. v. 6. Instead of, *A scattered sheep*, Houbigant reads, *a dispersed flock*; and he reads the latter part of the verse thus, *First the king of Assyria devoured him, and last this Nebuchadrezzar—both eaten up his bones; the first lion devoured his flesh, the last his bones.*

Ver. 20. *In those days, &c.*] That is, “I will be perfectly reconciled to them, as if they had never offended.” The Hebrew expresses the utter ceasing of any thing by *seeking and not finding*. Compare Psal. x. 15. xxxvii. 36. Isai. xli. 12.

Ver. 21. *Go up, &c.* The two places here mentioned, though unknown, are supposed to have been situate in the Babylonish dominions. The meaning of the words is, *the land of the rebels—and the inhabitants of visitation*: and some understand them of the Babylonians in the sense here given. These are the commands of God to Cyrus, though then unborn. Instead of *after them*, the Hebrew might be rendered *their posterity*: “Cut off from Babylon the name and remnant,” as God threatens, Isai. xiv. 23.

Ver. 23. *How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder, &c.*] *Divided and broken.* Houbigant. “How is that oppressive empire which smote the nations with a continual stroke, broken and destroyed!” The figure is strong and expressive.

Ver. 24. *I have laid a snare for thee*] Cyrus took the city



25 The LORD hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this *is* the work of the Lord GOD of Hosts in the land of the Chaldeans.

26 Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses: cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left.

27 Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter: woe unto them! for their day is come, the time of their visitation.

28 The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple.

29 Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel.

30 Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD.

31 Behold, I *am* against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord GOD of Hosts: for thy day is come, the time *that* I will visit thee.

32 And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will

kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.

33 ¶ Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; The children of Israel and the children of Judah *were* oppressed together: and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go.

34 Their Redeemer *is* strong; the LORD of Hosts *is* his name: he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.

35 ¶ A sword *is* upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wife *men*.

36 A sword *is* upon the liars; and they shall dote: a sword *is* upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed.

37 A sword *is* upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that *are* in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword *is* upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed.

38 A drought *is* upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it *is* the land of graven images, and they are mad upon *their* idols.

39 Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell *there*, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever: neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.

city by surprise, entering it when the walls were intire, the city full of provisions, and the people in high spirits, to their utter consternation, by having drained the Euphrates. See ver. 38.

Ver. 26. *Cast her up as heaps*] The marginal rendering of our Bibles, which is followed by Houbigant, seems preferable; *Tread her as heaps*, that is to say, as the corn is trodden down when it is threshed. The phrase alludes to the eastern way of threshing.

Ver. 27. *Slay all her bullocks*] The Vulgate and Chaldee have explained the sense of this figure by rendering it, *her strong men*.

Ver. 28. *The voice of them that flee, &c.*] Some of those who were more than ordinarily zealous for the welfare of God's church and people, were ready, upon the first news of the taking of Babylon, to bring the glad tidings to Judæa, that God had avenged his people, and executed his judgments on those who destroyed his temple. Compare ch. li. 51. and Dan. v. 1, 2, 3, 5, 30.

Ver. 34. *That he may give rest, &c.*] Houbigant renders it, *Rest to their land*; that is to say, to the Jews.

Ver. 36. *A sword is upon the liars*] *The diviners, and they shall be mad.* Houbigant.

Ver. 38. *A drought is upon her waters*] *A sword is upon her waters, that they may be dried up; because it is a land of idols, and they glory in vain gods.* Our translators, after the example of the Vulgate and others, read *חרב* *choreb*, in this place a drought, differently from the reading and sense given to it in the preceding verses, *חרב* *chereb*, a sword, as supposing that a sword has nothing to do with waters. But the sword is used metaphorically, to denote either the instrument of divine vengeance generally, or the operations and effects of war in particular; in either of which senses it may be applied to *waters* as well as to *treasures*. And the allusion here is evidently to the stratagem of Cyrus, who drained off the waters of the Euphrates, which ran through the city of Babylon, by means of which his troops by night marched along the bed of the river into the heart of the city, and surprised it.

Ver. 39. *Therefore, &c.*] *Therefore wild cats, with jackals, shall dwell there; and the daughters of the ostriches shall dwell therein, &c.*

Ver.

40 As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.

41 Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

42 They shall hold the bow and the lance: they are cruel: and will not shew mercy; their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array,

like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon.

43 The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble: anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travail.

44 Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who

*Ver. 44. Behold, &c.]* See the note and alterations of the version, ver. xlix. 19, &c.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The destruction of Babylon foretold, with her idols. And great joy would it administer, when these glad tidings were spread among the nations, that the rod of the oppressor was broken. From the north the evil comes; Media and Persia: and by the northern princes (north of Rome) shall the mystical Babylon be destroyed, and the joyful cry go forth, *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*, Rev. xiv. 6—8

2. The people of God have a comfortable prospect opened before them: they shall return to God and their own land. Israel and Judah, now re-united (many of the ten tribes joining with their brethren), shall go weeping, with penitential tears, confessing their provocations, and seek the Lord their God, in faith trusting on the divine covenant, established in the Messiah, and still encouraged to make their humble supplications to him from whom they have so greatly departed: for it is a sure symptom for good, when God bestows godly sorrow; and never can it be too late to return to him, when with weeping we seek his face. Restored to God's favour, they are in the way to recover their lost inheritance, and, dismissed by Cyrus, inquire the way to Zion, stedfastly setting their faces thitherward, encouraging one another to come and renew their broken covenant, and henceforth approve themselves to God with more unshaken fidelity. And this is most applicable to all God's believing people, who, when rescued from the dominion of sin, with shame lament their past departures, with diligence enquire after God, and in all his holy ways desire to be found walking before him. This may also particularly refer to the penitent return of the Jews at the last day.

3. Their past miseries, here lamented, should quicken them to improve the moment of opportunity given them by Cyrus. Like lost sheep they had long wandered, and those who should have led them aright, contributed to their errors: thus exposed, they fell an easy prey to the devourers, who vindicated the cruelties they exercised upon them, as if it were no offence to punish those severely who had transgressed so greatly against JEHOVAH and his worship. Therefore no sooner are they permitted to remove from Babylon, than they must eagerly seize the permission, and be as the he-goat before the flocks, each

willing to lead the way, and encourage their brethren to follow them. And this is exceedingly applicable to the Jews in their present dispersion, who are wanderers in all lands; still deceived by their teachers; forgetting their resting-place, Christ Jesus; and a prey to all nations in which they are scattered: yea, many to this day think it no crime to plunder a Jew: but the days will come, when they shall be called home to the Lord, the hope of their fathers. Note; (1.) Opportunity is precious, and should be embraced. (2.) In promoting a good cause, it is well to be zealously affected, and among the first to lead the way.

2dly, God's controversy with Babylon proceeds.

1. She is given into the hands of the Medes and Persians. At God's command their army assembles, and he directs their arrows to the mark, that none return in vain. Devoted to the spoil, Chaldea falls, depopulated and desolate; every one that passeth by shall hiss in derision, and be astonished at her plagues. The mother-city, Babylon shall be confounded and ashamed to find her helpless state, unable to make head against her besiegers, and forced to submit and yield her land. She, who was once the golden head of nations, shall sink into the lowest place, and be as a desert, barren and uninhabited, her walls razed from the foundations; not so much as the dregs of the people left, and her auxiliaries fled for fear of the Persian sword.

2. The cause of her fall is God's wrath and vengeance, provoked by the abuse of his people; for, though the Chaldeans were commissioned of God to afflict them for their sins, they meant only to gratify their own enmity and pride, and therefore exulted at the fall of Judah, fattened on their spoils, and bellowed as bulls with loud shouts, or neighed as horses, making their unhappy captives subservient to their bestial passions. Note; (1.) Though God over-rules men's wickedness for purposes of his own glory, that does not exculpate them. (2.) None may expect severer judgment from God than those who have persecuted God's people, or have maliciously rejoiced at their fall.

3. God promises mercifully to visit his people, and punish their oppressors. They had been as defenceless sheep worried by the lions: the king of Assyria had scattered the ten tribes, and now Nebuchadnezzar had crushed the very bones of the other two. But the king of Babylon shall be punished, as the king of Assyria had been; and righteous retaliation be rendered to their foes, while Israel

is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?

45 Therefore, hear ye the counsel of the LORD that he hath taken against Babylon; and his purposes that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make *their* habitation desolate with them.

46 At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations.

## C H A P. LI.

*The severe judgment of God against Babylon, in vindication of Israel. Jeremiah delivereth the book of this prophecy to Seraiah, to be cast into the Euphrates, in token of the perpetual sinking of Babylon.*

[Before Christ 595.]

**T**HUS saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind;

2 And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for

shall be restored to their own habitation; and God will give them peace and plenty, and every temporal blessing; and, better than all the rest, pardon every returning penitent freely, fully, and reserve the faithful for an habitation in a better country, that is, an heavenly. *Note;* (1.) They who imitate other men's sins, may expect to share their plagues. (2.) When we return to God in penitence, we shall find him meeting us with pardon. (3.) Temporal mercies are doubly sweet when coming in the way of divine love. (4.) When God pardons, he does it abundantly.

3dly, Babylon being doomed to ruin, we have,

1. A commission given to Cyrus; his way pointed out; his conquest assured to him. He is directed to march by the country of the Mardi, and through Pekod in Assyria, beginning his conquests with these, and to execute exactly the instructions given him; for, though a mighty conqueror, he is but God's servant, *Isai. xlv. 28.* Great is the destruction that he shall work, for the day of vengeance shall come. God's armoury is opened; he is furnished with weapons; both power and policy are given him from God. Caught as a beast in a snare, by stratagem the city is taken, and ravage universal ensues, God having enjoined the conqueror of Babylon to retaliate the injuries that she did to Zion; none must escape; her mighty men, like bullocks, shall be slaughtered; her young men fall in the streets; and her riches be a prey to the captors; the fire of God's wrath, thus kindled, shall burn till all the cities follow the fate of the capital, and none be ever able to restore the ruined monarchy. *Note;* The sinner, when rioting in plenty, is but as the ox fattening for the slaughter.

2. God is most righteous in these his judgments; for the sins of Babylon are increased. [1.] *Her tyranny.* She had been the hammer of the whole earth, breaking in pieces all who opposed her; but now, astonishing to behold! she is herself cut asunder and broken. [2.] *Her impious defiance of God.* Thou hast sinned against the Lord; oppressing his people, and challenging him to vindicate their quarrel. But woe to him that contendeth with his Maker. [3.] *Her profanation of the temple, and the vessels of the sanctuary:* for, though he suffers for a while the enemies of his church to triumph, he will speedily avenge her wrongs. [4.] *Her intolerable pride,* behaving most arrogantly even against the Lord himself, and thereby provoking his indignation:

*I am against thee, O thou most proud:* and who can stand when God riseth up as an enemy? *Note;* Unhumbled pride will have a fall, often in this world, into abject wretchedness; certainly in the next, into the belly of hell. 4thly, We have,

1. The recovery of God's people from their state of oppression. Israel and Judah both groaned under the yoke, and their conquerors refused to let them go: but, when God determines their deliverance, who can stay him? *Their Redeemer is strong,* yea, almighty to save, *the Lord of Hosts is his name,* whom all the armies of heaven and earth obey. *He shall thoroughly plead their cause,* avenge their wrongs, restore them to their own land, and punish their oppressors. And this is true of all the faithful Israel of God, suffering under antichristian tyranny: though their enemies refuse to let them go, the Lord is their avenger, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble them, to break the power of their persecutors; to set his faithful people free, to give them rest spiritually on earth, and eternally with himself in heaven. Let us therefore trust in the Lord, and rejoice in the comfort of his salvation.

2. The ruin of Babylon for her sins; particularly for her detention of God's Israel, and her abominable idolatries. *They are mad upon their idols,* so superstitiously devoted to them; or *their terrors,* their images being frightful, and their worshippers terrified with fear of them. And very applicable is this to the idolatries of Babylon mystical, where image worship so abounds. For this God's sword is drawn, and terribly descends upon her princes, her wife counsellors, her soothsayers, who deceived the people with their lies; upon her mighty warriors, her cavalry, her chariots, her auxiliaries, who should through fear become weak as women; and upon her treasures, devoted to the spoil. *A drought is sent upon her waters* in general, whence the land becomes barren, and famine ensues; or upon the river which ran through Babylon in particular, the course of which was turned; and, the bed of it, left dry, opened a passage into the city. So utterly shall this proud city be overthrown, that the wild beasts shall take up their abode in her ruinous palaces; and, like the cities of Gomorrah, her desolations shall be perpetual. From the north their merciless destroyers come, completely armed, and spreading their terrors on every side. Confounded at the report, the king of Babylon, like a travelling woman,

in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about.

3 Against *him that bendeth* let the archer bend his bow, and against *him that listeth himself up in his brigandine*: and spare ye not her young men; destroy ye utterly all her host.

4 Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and *they that are thrust through* in her streets.

5 For Israel *hath not been* forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of Hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.

6 Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD's vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence.

7 Babylon *hath been* a golden cup in the

LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad.

8 Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed; howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed.

9 We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up *even* to the skies.

10 The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

11 Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.

loses all power of resistance, and falls an easy prey. The very same expressions are used as in chap. vi. 22—24. to shew how exactly Babylon was to be punished according to her former treatment of Jerusalem. And as Nebuchadrezzar had served Edom, chap. xlix. 19—21. such a lion should Cyrus prove to Chaldea, devouring and destroying all before him. And as Babylon of old, so shall Babylon mystical be destroyed; when the saints of God will for ever triumph, and their enemies be eternally tormented, Rev. xiv. 8. xviii. 2—19.

#### C H A P. L I.

Ver. 1. *Them that rise up against me, &c.*] See chap. iv. 11.

Ver. 2. *Fanners, &c.*] *Winnowers, &c.* This image is frequently made use of by the Hebrew prophets to represent the ease with which the Almighty disperses and destroys his enemies. See Isai. xxi. 10.

Ver. 3. *Against him that bendeth*] *Let not him who bendeth the bow relax his hand; let him not put off his armour.* Houbigant.

*And against him that listeth himself up in his brigandine*] *And let him not lift up himself in his brigandine.* This is exactly parallel in sense to the preceding part of the verse, if the posture of him that stoops to bend the bow be considered. For in using the large and strong steel bows, which could not be bent by the force of the arms, they rested one end upon the ground, and pressing the other with the foot or knee, they drew back the arrow with their hands as far as ever they could, in order that it might fly with greater force. Hence the archer is called *דורקשת* *dorekeshbeth*, one that treadeth the bow. And therefore when he is bid not to lift himself up in his coat of mail, it is the same as bidding him not to desist from shooting with his bow.

Ver. 4. *Thus the slain shall fall*] *Let the wounded fall in the*

*land of the Chaldeans.* Houbigant. Dr. Kennicott would render it, *Thus the soldiers shall fall*; which seems to agree well with the 13th verse of the preceding chapter.

Ver. 5. *For Israel hath not been forsaken*] *For Israel shall not therefore be forsaken, or Judah without his God, the Lord of Hosts, because their land hath been filled with desolation by the Holy One of Israel.* Houbigant. Though God was justly displeased with his people; yet he will not cast them off utterly as a nation, or deprive them of his protection, though he will do so to those who have been the rod in his hand to chastise and scourge his people.

Ver. 7. *Babylon hath been a golden cup*] “The Lord has presented by the hand of Babylon and her kings the cup of his wrath to all the people of the earth: Egypt, Judæa, Phœnicia, Syria, Idumæa, and many other countries, have been drunk with the wine of the fury of the Lord, by the ministrations of Nebuchadrezzar.” The sense of this verse is plainly applied by St. John to spiritual Babylon, Rev. xiv. 8. xvii. 4. See the note on ch. xiv. 15.

Ver. 10. *The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness*] “The Lord hath made manifest the equity of our cause by the judgment which he hath brought upon Babylon.” See ver. 9.

Ver. 11. *Gather the shields*] *Fill the quivers.* Houbigant. Neriglissar king of Babylon having formed an alliance against the Medes, Cambyses sent his son Cyrus, with an army of thirty thousand Persians, to join the Medes, commanded by Cyaxares. This Cyaxares, king of Media, called in Scripture *Darius the Mede*, was the uncle of Cyrus; and it was properly his army which made the expedition against the Babylonians, Cyrus being employed as his general: Persia was then a small part of the empire of Media, and of little account till Cyrus advanced its

B b 2

reputation;

12 Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon.

13 O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.

14 The LORD of Hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee.

15 He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.

16 When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

17 Every man is brutish by his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.

18 They are vanity, the work of errors:

reputation; and even then it was called *the kingdom of the Medes and Persians*, the Medes having still the preference. See Lowth, and Xenophon's *Cyropæd.* lib. 1.

Ver. 13. *O thou that dwellest, &c.*] Upon the river Euphrates, which encompassed Babylon, and was thought to render the city impregnable. *Many waters* also signify mystically the many people over whom this was the reigning city: Compare Rev. xvii. 1, 15.

Ver. 14. *As with caterpillars*] *Locusts.*

Ver. 15. *He hath made the earth*] In this and the following verses we have an elegant and sublime description of the power and wisdom of the Almighty, in opposition to the weakness and inanity of idols. See Pf. cxxxv. 7. At the beginning of the 17th verse we may read, *Brutish, for want of knowledge.*

Ver. 19. *The Portion of Jacob, &c.*] *Not such a one is he who hath Jacob for his portion; for he hath created all things: not such a one is he who hath the sceptre of his inheritance; whose name is the Lord of Hosts.* Houbigant.

Ver. 20. *Thou art my battle-axe*] *Thou hast broken for me the weapons of war; I have broken by thee the nations, and destroyed kingdoms;* Houbigant: who renders the following verses also to the 24th in the perfect tense; and he understands the whole as spoken of the dominion of the Babylonians,

in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

19 The Portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance; the LORD of Hosts is his name.

20 Thou art my battle-axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations; and with thee will I destroy kingdoms;

21 And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider;

22 With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman; and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid.

23 I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers.

24 And I will render unto Babylon, and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea, all their evil that they have done in Zion, in your sight, saith the LORD.

25 Behold, I am against thee, O destroying

and not, as is commonly done, of Cyrus their conqueror.

Ver. 24. *And I will render unto Babylon*] *But, though I have made Babylon the instrument of my vengeance towards others, I will render unto Babylon all the evil which they have done in Zion, and these things shall be done before your eyes, saith the Lord.* See Houbigant.

Ver. 25. *Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain*] The Vulgate renders it more properly, *O corrupting mountain, which corruptest the whole earth.* Babylon, though seated in a low watery plain, is here called a *mountain*, not only on account of its lofty buildings, but of its pride, and as being the first and most haughty seat of idolatry. See Rev. xvii. 5. The similitude made use of in the subsequent part of the verse is strong and expressive. Earthquakes were frequent in Palestine; and the sacred writers have embellished their writings with repeated allusions to this terrible phenomenon. The prophet here compares a powerful nation doomed to destruction, to a ruinous mountain, or rather a volcano, which would soon be consumed, and involve other mountains in its ruins, and be so entirely wasted by its flames, that its very stones would be rendered useless. See Michaelis's notes, and Newton's *Dissertations*, vol. i. p. 279.

Ver.

mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth:—and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain.

26 And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD.

27 Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars.

28 Prepare against her the nations with the king of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion.

29 And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant.

30 The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in *their* holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwelling-places; her bars are broken.

31 One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end.

*Ver. 27. Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz.] See Isai. xiii. 4, 5. Instead of rough caterpillars, Bochart reads bristled locusts.*

*Ver. 31, 32. One post shall run to meet another.] As Babylon was taken by surprise, this occasioned many messengers to run one after another, to acquaint the king with this sudden and unexpected event. Herodotus says, that the extreme parts of the city were taken before those who lived in the centre were sensible of the danger. The beauty and sublimity of this passage, which describes this event as immediately before our eyes, is lost by our translation. Houbigant renders the 30th and these verses in the present tense, which gives the passage its due force; and he omits the connecting particles, which greatly augments its energy, ver. 31. Courier comes to meet courier,—messenger meets messenger,—to inform the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one side, ver. 32. That the passages are stopped [or surprised; see ver. 41].—That fires are burning among the reeds—that the men of war are terrified.*

32 And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burnt with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.

33 For thus saith the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor, *it is* time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.

34 Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out.

35 The violence done to me and to my flesh *be* upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say.

36 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.

37 And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment and an hissing, without an inhabitant.

38 They shall roar together like lions; they shall yell as lions' whelps.

39 In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD.

40 I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he-goats.

41 How is Shefhach taken! and how is

*Ver. 34. Nebuchadrezzar—hath crushed me.] This is a pathetic description of the calamities brought upon the Jews by Nebuchadrezzar and his forces; who, after devouring the wealth, and laying waste the beauty of their country, carried them away captives into a strange land. The imprecation in the following verse is very similar to that in Ps. cxxxvii. 8.*

*Ver. 36. Her sea.] That is to say, her river. [Euphrates].*

*Ver. 39. In their heat I will make their feasts.] I will give them their cup when they are now heated, and I will make them drunken, that they may be sick, and sleep, &c. “While they are feasting themselves, I will provide them another cup “to drink; namely, that of my fury and indignation.” See the note on ver. 7. It is very well known, that Babylon was taken on a night of public rejoicing, in honour of the goddesses Shefhach, mentioned in the next note.*

*Ver. 41. How is Shefhach taken!.] That is, Babylon; called Shefhach from the goddesses of that name, which the Babylonians worshipped, and which is supposed by Calmet to have*

the praise of the whole earth surpris'd! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!

42 The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof.

43 Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth *any* son of man pass thereby.

44 And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall.

45 My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.

46 And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall both come *one* year, and after that in *another* year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler.

47 Therefore, behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be

confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.

48 Then the heaven and the earth, and all that *is* therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD.

49 As Babylon *hath* caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.

50 Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.

51 We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces: for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD's house.

52 Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images: and through all her land the wounded shall groan.

53 Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD.

54 A sound of a cry *cometh* from Babylon,

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have been the same with the moon. See ch. xxv. 26. The prophet calls Babylon *the praise of the whole earth*, as it was esteemed one of the wonders of the world, for the height, breadth, and compass of its wall, the palace and hanging-gardens belonging to it, the temple of Belus, &c. See chap. xlix. 25. Dan. iv. 30. and Isai. xiii. 19.

Ver. 42. *The sea is come up*] A multitude of people, which, like an inundation, carry all before them.

Ver. 44. *And I will punish Bel*] *And I do take vengeance or judgment upon Bel in Babylon, and I will draw his morsel out of his mouth; and the nations, &c.* That is, the presents which have been brought to his temple from foreign nations shall be restored; which was particularly verified with respect to the holy vessels of the temple at Jerusalem. Xerxes too plundered the temple of Belus of immense wealth. This passage may be further explained from the apocryphal history of Bel and the Dragon. This verse, I apprehend, should close with the words, *shall not flow any more unto him*; and the 45th begin, *The very walls of Babylon shall fall; go ye therefore, my people, out of the midst, &c.*

Ver. 46. *And lest your heart faint*] *Let not your heart faint, neither do ye tremble when a rumour shall be heard in the land: One year a rumour shall come, and then another rumour in the same year. Then the spoiler shall come into the land, ruler after ruler.* Houbigant. The prophet gives

these tokens, that they may know that the time of the dissolution of the Babylonish empire is drawing near; namely, that the first rumour of war denounced against the head of that empire shall be the year before the siege, when Cyrus and Belshazzar shall engage in a battle, and the latter shall be defeated: upon which the conqueror in the following year shall lay siege to Babylon itself. See Lowth and Calmet.

Ver. 47. *Therefore, behold*] *For, behold.* Instead of *all her slain*, Houbigant reads *all her wounded*, as in ver. 4. and Kennicott *all her soldiers*: and so in the 49th verse, the latter reads, *as Babylon hath caused the soldiers of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the soldiers of all that country, or land.* The next verse should be read, *And the heavens and the earth shall shout over Babylon.*

Ver. 49. *So at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth*] *So through Babylon have fallen the slain of the whole earth.* The reason is here assigned, why the heavens and the earth, and all that were therein, should rejoice at the fall of Babylon, because not only the people of Israel, but of the whole earth likewise, had been greatly annoyed by the power of that ambitious nation.

Ver. 51. *We are confounded*] The prophet repeats the words of those pious exiles, when they reflected upon the desolation of God's people and sanctuary. See Lam. ii. 15, 16. Pl. xlv. 15, 16. lxxix. 4.

Ver.



and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans :

55 Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice ; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered.

56 Because the spoiler is come upon her, *even* upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken : for the LORD God of recompences shall surely requite.

57 And I will make drunk her princes, and her wife *men*, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men : and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the king, whose name is the LORD of Hosts.

58 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts ; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire ; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

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*Ver. 55. And destroyed out of her the great voice*] When cities are populous, they are of course noisy. See Isai. xxii. 2. Silence is therefore a mark of depopulation ; and in this sense we are to understand God's destroying or taking away out of Babylon the great noise, which during the time of her prosperity was constantly heard there ; "the busy hum of men," as the poet very expressively calls it. In this manner the mystical Babylon is threatened, Rev. xviii. 22, 23. Compare ch. vii. 34. xvi. 9. xxv. 10.

*Ver. 57. I will make drunk, &c.*] See ver. 39. This refers to the same remarkable circumstance in the capture of Babylon.

*Ver. 58. The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken*] See Isai. xlvii. 7, 8. and 13. Houbigant reads the latter part of the verse, *And the people shall labour for a thing of nought, and exhaust their strength for the flames, &c.*

*Ver. 59. The word, &c.*] *This was the commandment which Jeremiah the prophet gave to Seraiah,—when he went in the retinue of Zedekiah, &c. But this Seraiah was the chief chamberlain, ver. 60. For Jeremiah, after he had written, &c. ver. 61, said to Seraiah, &c. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 63. Thou shalt bind a stone to it, &c.*] The prophets, as we have seen, frequently gave sensible representations of judgments which they foretold. The present was a sufficient and striking emblem of Babylon's sinking irrecoverably under the judgments here denounced against her. This threatening was in a literal sense fulfilled by Cyrus's breaking down the head or dam of the great lake, which was on the west side of the city, in order to turn the current of the river that way ; for no care being afterwards taken to repair the breach, the whole country round it was overflowed. See Isai. xiv. 23. Houbigant ends the 64th

59 ¶ The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign. And *this* Seraiah was a quiet prince.

60 So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, *even* all these words that are written against Babylon.

61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words,

62 Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever.

63 And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, *that* thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates ;

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verse with the words *I will bring upon her* ; and reads the last clause thus, *Here the words of Jeremiah are ended*, which plainly shews that the next chapter was added by the person who collected this prophecy into a volume, who most probably was Ezra. See the note on the first verse of that chapter.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, For the comfort of God's people, and the confusion of his enemies, the destruction of Babylon is at large insisted on.

1. God sends forth and commissions the Medes and Persians to destroy that proud city : like a whirlwind they shall sweep the earth, and scatter the Chaldeans as chaff, killing all who dared resist them, without mercy or pity. The Persian standard is erected, and multitudes flock to it, thick as the caterpillars or locusts cover the ground ; for when God hath work to do, instruments shall never be wanting.

2. Notwithstanding all the former might of this famed city, it shall now be weak, and unable to resist. Once God had clothed her with strength, and, as his battle-ax, sent her to break in pieces the nations, their forces, and all their inhabitants small and great ; but now in vain they prepare their weapons of war, and furbish their armour, rusty with long peace : in vain they erect their standard, and summon their soldiers to attend, to guard the walls, or prepare an ambush for their enemies. Their courage is utterly gone, they are become as timorous as women, and fall without resistance ; so easily can God, when he sends his terrors forth, make cowards of the bravest.

3. The provocation that Babylon had given was great : her sins cried to heaven for vengeance. [1.] They have risen up against me, in daring rebellion against God, and defiance

64 And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her : and they shall be weary. Thus far *are* the words of Jeremiah.

defiance of his power. [2.] *Babylon is a golden cup, that made all the earth drunken* with her wrath ; or, she hath been the head seat of idolatry, and the great temptress to all the nations over whom her power extended ; by force or fraud engaging them to partake of her abominations, and, like her, become mad upon idols. [3.] Her incorrigibleness : *We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed.* The faithful among the Jews that dwelt there would have turned them from their idolatries, but they were hardened in them. Though this may also be understood of her auxiliary forces, who in vain attempted to rescue her from ruin, her time to fall being come. [4.] Her covetousness was insatiable, grasping still at farther conquests and spoils. [5.] Her tyranny over God's people : as a dragon, Nebuchadrezzar had swallowed and devoured them ; broke all their bones as a lion ; and emptied them of all that was valuable ; for which violence and bloodshed, the inhabitants of Zion imprecate just vengeance upon their ravagers ; and these appeals of God's oppressed people shall not be long unanswered.

4. God in just judgment brings on Babylon the terrible ruin that she has provoked by her *sin against the Holy One of Israel.* He will plead the cause of his distressed people, who seemed to be deserted and forsaken, and will take vengeance for them. The time is fixed, when the wrongs of Zion shall be requited ; and God's people shall see the day when Babylon shall fall as the slain of Israel, who fell by her sword. And this is the work of the Lord, and to be declared in Zion to his praise, vindicating his people's cause, and with a mighty and out-stretched arm punishing their foes. He hath sworn their destruction and is fully able to execute his threatenings, being the almighty Lord, the maker and governor of all, whom heaven and earth obey, and against whom the Babylonish idols can avail nothing ; as he had before declared, chap. x. 12—16. where the very same expressions are used. When this Lord of Hosts arises, sure desolation marks his way : *Babylon is fallen*, though now in all her pride : since God hath pronounced her doom, it is as sure as if already executed. The waters on which she dwelt shall afford her no defence, their course being diverted, and her rivers dried up by the besiegers ; nor her treasures protect her, when her time is come. Though strong as a mountain, and late the destroyer of the nations, she is now made a *threshing-floor*, where all her inhabitants should be beaten in pieces. From year to year the rumour comes of the vast preparations made by the Persians ; at last they approach ; a battle ensues ; the Babylonians are routed, and driven within their walls, nor can these protect them ; while there secure they revel, sudden their enemies enter through the bed of the river, and surprise them in their drunken feast. Swift flies the dreadful news ; messenger upon messenger informs the affrighted king that his city is taken, the passages seized, and resistance vain. The houses are on fire, the bars of the gates broken : roaring at their impious carousal, and drunken, they are slain, and lie down to wake no more, slaughtered as easily as

sheep. Deluged by the army of the Persians breaking in like the waves of the sea, and utterly desolate, the land becomes a wilderness, the cities uninhabited, their gods falling in the common ruin, and, so far from helping their votaries, that they are unable to defend themselves. Yea, so entirely demolished shall these proud walls be, the wonder of the world, on which several chariots might drive abreast, that there should not be a stone left fit for any use ; her gates burnt with fire, the very foundations razed ; and every attempt to repair these desolations for ever fruitless.

5. The people of God are warned to flee when they see the ruin approaching, that they may not be involved in it, nor overwhelmed with the terror of the destroying enemy, and gladly to accept the offer of liberty which Cyrus shall proclaim to them. They who had *escaped the sword* of the Chaldeans, reserved in mercy for such a time, must haste away to their own land. They are called to *remember the Lord afar off*, in the land of their captivity, and to think of Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, with eager longing to return thither, notwithstanding its present desolate state ; at which they had been confounded, ashamed to think of their abominations, which had provoked God to give up his sanctuary to the profanation of the heathen. But God now hath avenged their quarrel and his own, and condignly punished the Chaldeans and their gods, over whom Israel now may triumph. *Note ;* (1.) When we know that the wrath of God is revealed against a world lying in wickedness, it is our wisdom to come out from among them, and be separate. (2.) In whatever state of affliction or distress we are, it is our duty, and will be our comfort, to think upon God, and remember his faithfulness, mercy, and truth.

6. According to their several interests, those who hear of Babylon's fall will be greatly affected. Some with astonishment and deep concern behold her sudden fall, and with an exceeding great and bitter cry bewail her desolations ; others shall rejoice in it, *yea, the very heaven and the earth shall sing*, giving praise to God for avenging the blood of his saints, and for the recovery of his people from captivity. Throughout the whole description, if we compare Rev. xviii. with this chapter, we shall see the strongest resemblance in the expressions ; and as now this proud city, here devoted to ruin, has been for many ages desolate, according to the prophetic word ; so surely shall Babylon mystical, the city of Rome, and the tyranny of popery, be destroyed, when God's time of vengeance comes.

2dly, The prophecy concerning Babylon was long and terrible. We have,

1. A copy of it written and sent to the captive Jews in Babylon, by Seraiah, a quiet prince in those turbulent times, who was for peace ; and it is spoken of to his honour. He *went with Zedekiah*, as our version renders the words, or was sent *from Zedekiah*, as his ambassador to Nebuchadrezzar, in the fourth year of his reign, and sixty years before the destruction of Babylon.

C H A P. LII.

*Zedekiah rebelleth. Jerusalem is besieged and taken: Zedekiah's sons killed, and his own eyes put out. Nebuzaradan burneth and spoileth the city: he carrieth away the captives. Evil-merodach advanceth Jehoiachin.*

[Before Christ 598.]

**Z**EDEKIAH was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

2 And he did *that which was evil* in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

3 For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that

2. He is enjoined to read the words of the roll when he came to Babylon, in the presence of the captive Jews, for their encouragement; for, however improbable the event, when they considered that vast city, so populous, and strongly fortified, the accomplishment of God's word was sure. *Note*; The eye of faith staggers at no difficulties; if God hath promised, that is enough.

3. He must make a solemn profession of his own faith in the truth of what he had read, that it would surely be fulfilled; and then in the presence of the people must tie a stone to the roll, and cast it into the river Euphrates, explaining the sign, that *thus should Babylon sink, and not rise up again*; wearied out with her plagues, exhausted, and unable to repair her desolations. *Thus far are the words of Jeremiah*; not that this was the last of his prophecies, but that here the burden of Babylon ends. With still greater magnificence is the fall of Babylon mystical represented Rev. xviii. 21.; and when God's final wrath is poured out upon the ungodly, their ruin will be irrecoverable and eternal.

C H A P. LII.

*Ver. 1. Zedekiah was one-and-twenty years old*] The present chapter seems to belong to the book of *Lamentations*, and serves as a kind of proem to them. The generality of commentators are agreed, that this chapter could not be added by Jeremiah, not only because a great part of it is a repetition of what he himself had related in the 39th and 40th chapters of his prophecy, but because mention is made in it of the reign of Evil-merodach; and of some transactions which happened at the end of Jeconiah's reign, and after Jeremiah's death. Indeed, the chapter is chiefly taken out of the latter part of the second book of Kings, with some few additions, probably supplied by Ezra. It is therefore most reasonable to conclude, that this chapter was added by Ezra, who designed this brief history of the desolations of the Jewish nation as an

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Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

4 ¶ And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, *that* Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about.

5 So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

6 And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was fore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.

7 Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the gate

introduction to the book of Lamentations. See Grotius, Calmet, and the notes on 2 Kings, xxiv. 18, &c. to the end of chap. xxv.

*Ver. 3. For through the anger of the Lord, &c.] For it was so because of the anger of JEHOVAH against Judah and Jerusalem.* The particle *'ki*, is here causal, and assigns a reason for what went before; namely, why Zedekiah succeeded Jehoiakim in the throne. 'This happened, it is said, "because of the anger of JEHOVAH;" not that JEHOVAH instigated either them or any man else to do wickedly; but it was of his special order and appointment, for the punishment of a wicked people, that men of such perverse and evil dispositions were advanced to be their kings. For having determined, as it is said, 2 Kings, 21. 11—16. to execute a signal vengeance upon Judah and Jerusalem for the very heinous provocations that he had received during the reign of Manasseh, he first of all removed the good Josiah out of the way, from respect to whose piety he would not bring the evil in his days, and thus opened the succession to his sons, the badness of whose principles favoured the designs of God's justice, and led them to pursue measures equally fatal to themselves and their country. For hence it flowed, that to their other wicked and sinful actions they added one no less impolitic than profligate, that of rebelling against a prince, to whom they were engaged by all the ties of religion, honour, and gratitude; one who had power to crush them, and who exercised that power with the most unrelenting severity. Thus truly might it be said of the people of Judah, in the words of the prophet Hosea, chap. xiii. 11. "God gave them kings in his anger, and "took, or applied, them to the purposes of his indignation;" which indeed is but another way of expressing the sense here intended, namely, that it, Zedekiah's succession, was the consequence of the anger of JEHOVAH against Judah and Jerusalem, and designed finally to terminate in his removal of them out of his sight.

C c

*Ver.*

between the two walls, which *was* by the king's garden; now the Chaldeans *were* by the city round about: and they went by the way of the plain.

8 ¶ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.

9 Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him.

10 And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah.

11 Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

12 ¶ Now in the fifth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, which *was* the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, *which* served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem,

13 And burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great *men*, burnt he with fire.

14 And all the army of the Chaldeans, that *were* with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about.

15 Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive *certain* of the poor of the people, and the residue of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude.

16 But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left *certain* of the poor of the land for vine-dressers and for husbandmen.

17 ¶ Also the pillars of brass that *were* in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and

the brasen sea that was in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the bras of them to Babylon.

18 The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away.

19 And the basons, and the fire-pans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; *that* which *was* of gold *in* gold, and *that* which *was* of silver *in* silver, took the captain of the guard away.

20 The two pillars, one sea, and twelve brasen bulls that *were* under the bases, which king Solomon had made in the house of the LORD: the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

21 And *concerning* the pillars, the height of one pillar *was* eighteen cubits; and a fillet of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof *was* four fingers: *it was* hollow.

22 And a chapter of brass *was* upon it; and the height of one chapter *was* five cubits, with net-work and pomegranates upon the chapters round about, all *of* brass. The second pillar also and the pomegranates *were* like unto these.

23 And there were ninety and six pomegranates on a side; *and* all the pomegranates upon the net-work *were* an hundred round about.

24 ¶ And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

25 He took also out of the city an eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host who mustered the people of the land; and threescore men of the people of the land, *that were* found in the midst of the city.

Ver. 7. *And they went by the way of the plain*] In the parallel passage in Kings, it is, *And the king went the way toward the plain.*

Ver. 25. *An eunuch*] *An officer.* So it is read in the parallel places.

26 So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah.

27 And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land.

28 ¶ This is the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year three thousand Jews, and three and twenty:

29 In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons:

30 In the three and twentieth year of

Nebuchadrezzar Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons were four thousand and six hundred.

31 ¶ And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison,

32 And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon.

*Ver. 32. And set his throne above the throne of the kings, &c.] And set his seat above the seat of the kings.* This may easily be understood to signify, that the king of Babylon shewed him more respect and honour than he did to any of the other captive princes, by placing him nearest himself. See Esth. iii. 1. It is probable, the phrase may have proceeded from the custom of placing cushions for persons of more than ordinary distinction in the place allotted them to sit in. See Harmer's Observ. ch. vi. obs. 26.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We are here told,

1. The cause of the ruin of Zedekiah and the people. It was their sins which provoked God's wrath against them: and what particularly hastened their destruction was, his rebellion against the king of Babylon, in violation of the oath of God which was upon him; and this God permitted as a punishment for his former sins. *Note;* When sinners wilfully depart from God, he gives them up to their own folly; and usually nothing more is needful to push them on their destruction.

2. The instruments employed were, the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar, who, after a siege of about eighteen months, took the city by assault, the famine having disabled the besiegers, and the obstinacy of the king and princes preventing a surrender.

3. Too late the king, and the men of war who survived, attempted to escape. Though covered by the night, they are quickly pursued and taken. See the unhappy king dragged as a criminal before the Babylonish monarch; judgment passed upon him; his sons murdered before his eyes; his princes slain; and then, as if to fix upon his mind continually the memory of the shocking scene, his eyes put out; in chains carried to Babylon, and condemned in a prison to languish out the remainder of his miserable days. He would not be warned, therefore he must suffer for it.

2dly. A month after the taking of the city, we have an account of its entire demolition by Nebuzar-adan, sent for this purpose by Nebuchadnezzar: the temple is laid in ashes, after being plundered of all its vessels and all its brass; the quantity of which was immense, and the particulars of which are mentioned, to shew the exact fulfil-

ment of the prediction, chap. xxvii. 19. The palaces and houses of Jerusalem are burnt to the ground, the walls razed, and the residue of the people, who survived the siege and famine, led captive by the Chaldean army. A melancholy scene! a warning to other nations, how dangerous it is to provoke a jealous God!

3dly, When the sword is drawn, it is not quickly sheathed. We have,

1. The dreadful execution of seventy-four of the principal men, who were brought up by Nebuzar-adan to the king of Babylon at Riblah. The account in 2 Kings, xxv. 18, 19. reckons them but seventy-two; some hence imagine, that Jeremiah and Ebed-melech were of the number who were taken, but afterwards released; or two, of less note than the rest, might not be there reckoned. All these were murdered in cold blood by Nebuchadnezzar's orders, as a punishment for their rebellion; and we must own this to be the just fate of traitors, while we condemn the cruelty of the Chaldean king.

2. Their repeated captivities in the seventh, the eighteenth, and twenty-third years of Nebuchadnezzar. The two former we had an account of, 2 Kings, xxiv. 12, &c. though the numbers considerably differ. Perhaps here the men of note only are mentioned, and the officers; there the common people also: but the latter probably was the gleanings of the people after the death of Gedaliah and the flight of Johanan: a number small and inconsiderable, compared to the multitudes which once dwelt in the land; but by pestilence, famine, and the sword, they were thus miserably reduced. Such ravages does sin make!

4thly, There is a difference between the account given, ver. 31. and that in 2 Kings, xxv. 27. There Jehoiachin's deliverance from prison is said to be on the 27th day of the 12th month; here on the 25th: probably the orders were given this day, though not executed till two days after. The captive king experienced now a very happy change; released from his prison; arrayed in royal robes, instead of his prison-garments; his throne exalted above his fellow-captive monarchs; treated with great affection and regard by the Babylonish emperor; admitted to a constant seat at his table, and nobly provided for all his days.

33 And changed his prison-garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life.

diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion, until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

34 And *for* his diet, there was a continual

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Thus strange are the changes of this shifting scene; prosperity and adversity are often set over-against each other, that in our highest estate we may never be confident, nor, in the lowest, despair. It was, no doubt, matter of inexpressible joy to this unhappy captive, after so long a confinement, once more to taste the sweets of liberty.

But how much greater the delight of the captive soul, when delivered from the bondage of corruption through the blood of the covenant; exchanging its filthy prison-garments for the glorious robe of righteousness; fed at the table of the King of kings; yea, called to sit down on his throne.

# THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

DR. SOUTH says of this book, "One would think that every letter was wrote with a tear, every word the sound of a breaking heart; that the author was a man compacted of sorrows, disciplined to grief from his infancy; one who never breathed but in sighs, nor spoke but in a groan." *Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 31. Bishop Lowth, in agreement with the general opinion, says, that the subject of the book of Lamentations is, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the catastrophe of the king, and the massacre of his subjects; and he observes, that all these topics are treated of, not as events predicted as future, but as events which were past. The prophet deploras the miseries of his country with so much elegance and pathos, that he may be said to have done justice to the melancholy subject; and it may be added, that there is no poem extant, which can afford so happy, so uncommon, so elegant a variety of circumstances and images within so short a compass. What can be more elegant and poetical than the image of the city, which was formerly the pride of nations, sitting by herself, absorbed in grief, and a widow; deserted by her friends, betrayed by her relations, stretching out her hands in vain, and finding no one to comfort her? What can be more elegant than the image of the ways of Zion, which are represented as grieving, and demanding the celebration of their solemn festivals? But if we should produce all the beautiful passages, we should be obliged to transcribe the whole poem. It may be proper just to observe, that there is another opinion concerning the subject of this poem, defended at large by Michaelis, in his notes upon Bishop Lowth's *Prelections*, p. 116, &c.; namely, that it was composed upon the death of king Josiah. See the note on ch. iii. 27. and v. 7.

Concerning the plan of this book, the reader will observe, that it is composed after the manner of the funeral odes already spoken of in the notes on Jer. ix. 17. The elegant writer above quoted remarks, that these funeral odes were uttered upon different occasions, and at last placed in the same collection: whoever, therefore, expects to find an artificial disposition of parts, a connection between these different sacred rhapsodies, and a peculiar elegance of composition, is mistaken in the intention of the writer. Singing the funeral ode of his ruined country, and as it were in the character of a person who grieves at the obsequies of a dear relation, the author pours out whatever presents itself and arises in his mind on so deplorable an occasion: he dwells upon the same ideas; varies and amplifies the same things by new expressions, images, and figures; so that his work seems rather a composition or accumulation of things almost similar, than an artful connection of various ones, growing upon the mind by a continual gradation. I would not be understood as excluding from this work all regard for order, or as insinuating that there is not frequently an elegant or easy transition from one thing, or image, or person, or figure, to another; all that I mean is, that the nature and design of this poem is such; it being a collection of distinct and unconnected sentences, in each of which it imitates the form of funeral odes or dirges: it neither stands in need of, nor can admit, all that excellence of order and distribution which appear to so much advantage in other compositions.

*This*



*This work is divided into five parts. In the first, second, and fourth, the prophet speaks himself, or introduces Jerusalem as speaking; in the third, the chorus of the Jews speaks as a single person, agreeably to the Greek custom: in the fifth, which may be termed the epilogue of this work, the whole body of the Jews pour out their groans and supplications to God in their captivity. This last part is divided into twenty-two periods, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; but all the rest begin with a different letter, according to their alphabetical order. The design of these acrostic or alphabetical poems was, to assist the memory in retaining sentences or ideas which seemed to want connection; a custom formerly adopted by the Syrians, Arabians, and Persians, and practised by them to this very day. Each of the five parts into which this work is divided, is subdivided into two and twenty stanzas or strophes. Each of these stanzas, in the three first parts, consists of three verses; except, that in each of the first parts there is one stanza consisting of four verses. In the first four parts, the first letter of each stanza follows the order of the alphabet; but in the third, each of the verses of the same stanza begins with the same letter. In the fourth part, all the stanzas are distichs, or consist of two verses, as likewise in the fifth, which is not alphabetical or acrostic; and it is remarkable, that the verses in this last part are very short, but long in all the others. It is also observable, that the verses in this book are longer than usual; they consist, upon a medium, of twelve feet, there being some shorter, and others two or three syllables longer. This peculiar measure should not be looked upon as an affair of no moment; for it is probable, that the prophet made use of it as being more flowing, copious, soft, and better adapted to grief and complaint than any other. To which we may add, that the dirges sung at funerals were in the same measure; since all the lamentations which occur in the prophets, composed in imitation of those dirges, are, if I mistake not, in the same kind of verse. We may just remark further, that this book was most likely composed by Jeremiah in the land of Egypt, where, it is thought, he ended his days; for we never hear of his return thence. See Bishop Lowth's 22d Prelection.*

## CHAP. I.

*The miserable estate of Jerusalem by reason of her sin: she complaineth of her grief, and confesseth God's judgment to be righteous.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**H**OW doth the city sit solitary, *that was full of people!* how is she become as a

widow! she *that was* great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!

2 She weepeth fore in the night, and her tears *are* on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort *her*: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.

## CHAP. I.

*Ver. 1. How doth the city sit, &c.]* Houbigant renders the first part of this verse thus, *How doth the city sit solitary! How is she become a widow, that was full of people!* Cities are commonly described as the mothers of their inhabitants, and the kings and princes as their husbands and children. When therefore they are bereaved of these, they are said to be widows and childless. Under these affecting circumstances Jerusalem is described as sitting alone, and in a pensive condition, the multitude of her inhabitants being dispersed and destroyed. It is remarkable, that in times similar to this, that is to say, in the reign of the emperor Vespasian, a coin was struck, on which Judæa is represented under the image of a woman sitting in tears beneath a palm-tree. Jerusalem is said to

have been *great among the nations*, as, in the time of her prosperity, she made conquests of various countries, and held them in subjection to her. See Isai. xlvii. 1. Calmet and Lowth.

*Princess among the provinces]* *She that was sovereign over provinces.* See what is said of David's conquests and sovereignty over the neighbouring states, 2 Sam. viii. 1—14. x. 6—19. of the extent of his son Solomon's dominions, 1 Kings, iv. 21. 24. of the power of Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chro. xvii. 10, 11. and also in that of Uzziah, 2 Chro. xxvi. 6, 7, 8.

*Ver. 2. Among all her lovers, &c.]* "All her allies, " whose friendship she courted by sinful compliances, have " forsaken her in the *night* of her afflictions, and even " joined with her enemies in insulting over her."

*Ver.*

3 Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude; she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits.

4 The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.

5 Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the LORD hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.

6 And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed; her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

7 Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths.

8 Jerusalem hath grievously sinned: therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.

9 Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter. O LORD, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified himself.

10 The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation.

11 All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vile.

12 ¶ Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger!

*Ver. 3. Because of affliction, and—servitude] She sitteth in affliction and in great service among the heathen, and findeth no rest.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 4. The ways of Zion do mourn] This verse seems evidently and beyond dispute to fix the subject of this poem to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple; the prophet lamenting in it the total desolation of the holy city, and the cessation of all religious services and ceremonies there.*

*Ver. 5. Her adversaries are the chief] Literally, are at, or for the head. They rule over, or are superior to her. See Isai. ix. 15. Deut. xxviii. 13.*

*Ver. 6. Like harts] Like rams,—And they go without strength before him who driveth them.*

*Ver. 7. Jerusalem remembered, &c.] Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction, and of her exile, all the pleasant things which she had in the days of old. Her people fall into the hand of the enemy, and no one helpeth her; her enemies behold this, and rejoice in her wound, or distress.* Houbigant; who observes, that the word *נשבתה* *misbatteha*, rendered *sabbaths*, is never so used, and that there does not appear any reason why the Chaldeans should particularly mock the *sabbaths*; nor is there any thing in what goes before that may lead to such an interpretation. Instead of *sabbaths*, the Vatican copy of the LXX reads *dwelling*, the Alexandrian, *captivity*; the Chaldee, *good things*; and the Syriac, *contrition*. It may be proper, however, to remark, that the observation of the sabbath was a common reproach thrown out by the Heathens against the Jews. Even the wife Seneca looked upon the seventh day as lost, on account of the cessation,

which is enjoined, from all labour; and many other authors have taken upon them to censure this holy and important practice.

*Ver. 8. Because they have seen her nakedness] That is to say, her disgrace.* For, according to the idea of those times, nothing could be inflicted more ignominious or disgraceful than to strip them of their garments. There are others who give the passage a different turn.

*Ver. 9. She remembereth not her last end] She hath not remembered her latter end.* Houbigant. The apostrophe at the close of the verse, wherein the city is represented as addressing herself to God, is very nervous and animated.

*Ver. 10. Upon all her pleasant things] The latter part of the verse explains what is meant by this phrase; namely, the offerings and presents made to the sanctuary.*

*Ver. 12. Is it nothing to you] Come unto me all ye that pass by.* Houbigant. Michaelis would render it, *Not unto you that pass by, [namely, do I call].* The preceding verse ended thus, *See, O Lord, and consider, for I am become vile;* and then immediately follows, *“Not unto you who pass by do “I cry, Behold, and see,” &c. that is, “I do not make “this address to you who pass by; I do not call you who “have heard this my complaint, as spectators and witnesses of my grief; ye are unable to condole with me; “for what sorrow can be equal unto my sorrow, &c.?”* The sense given in our version appears to me the most expressive and emphatical. The last words are read by Schultens, *Sorrow, whereby the Lord hath exhausted me, or, hath altogether tortured me, in the day, &c.*

*Ver.*

13 From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaleth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day.

14 The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall, the LORD hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up.

15 The LORD hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me, to crush my young men: the LORD hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a wine-press.

16 For these things I weep: mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.

17 Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her: the LORD hath commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries should be round about him: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them.

18 ¶ The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow: my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.

19 I called for my lovers, but they deceived me: my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they fought their meat to relieve their souls.

20 Behold, O LORD; for I am in distress: my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death.

21 They have heard that I sigh: there is none to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad

*Ver. 15. The Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a wine-press] As in a wine-vat.* This metaphor is easily to be understood of causing such an effusion of blood in Jerusalem, as to resemble the treading of the juice out of the ripe grapes in vintage-time. See *Isai. lxiii. 2, 3. Rev. xiv. 20. xix. 15.*

*Ver. 17. Zion spreadeth forth her hands] She extendeth her hands as a suppliant, praying for relief and consolation: so Virgil says of Turnus:*

*Ille, humilis supplesque, oculos dextramque preantem  
Protendens. ÆN. xii. l. 930.*

Now low on earth the lofty chief is laid,  
With eyes cast upwards, and with arms display'd.

DRYDEN.

See *Pf. lxxxviii. 9. cxliii. 6.*

*Ver. 19. I called for my lovers] That is, "My allies, the Egyptians, and others, who had promised me assistance, "but in the day of necessity cast me off." See on ver. 2.*

*While they fought their meat to relieve their souls] The LXX and the Syriac add, "and found none." But no such words appear in the Hebrew copies, although the thing is implied; for had they found what they sought, they would not have died.*

*Ver. 20. Abroad the sword, &c.] Without, the sword bereaveth; within, the mortality.* Virgil has an expression remarkably similar to this:

*Cruelis ubique  
Luctus, ubique pavor, et plurima mortis imago. ÆN. ii. l. 368.*

Death in a thousand forms destructive frown'd,  
And woe, despair, and horror rag'd around.

PITT.

Or, as our great poet describes the lazarus-house,

Despair  
Tended the sick busiest from couch to couch;  
And over them triumphant Death his dart  
Shook. PARADISE LOST, b. xi. 489, &c.

Death acting as it were in *propria persona*; and not by the instrumentality of another, as when a person is slain by the sword.

*Ver. 21. There is none to comfort me] Grief is timorous and suspicious, fertile in inventing torments for itself, scarcely brooking the least neglect, but entirely impatient of the least mockery or contempt.* The prophet has beautifully expressed this circumstance in the passage before us. See *ver. 7.* *The day*, spoken of in the latter part of this verse, means that appointed for the execution of God's judgments upon the Babylonians and other enemies of the Jews, according to the predictions of Jeremiah in the 46th and following chapters of his prophecy. The next verse might be rendered, *All their wickedness shall come before thee, and thou wilt do unto them as, &c.* See Bishop Lowth's 23d Prelection, and Calmet. Instead of, *Do unto them, &c.* Schultens reads, *Exhaust thou them, as thou hast exhausted me.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, With plaintive notes of woe the prophet's mournful muse begins, and bids each reader drop the sympathetic tear.

1. He bewails the desolations of Jerusalem: how changed from all her former glory, into what an abyss of wretchedness fallen: he is amazed at what he beheld, and, commiserating her afflicted case, breaks forth, *How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! Silence reigns*

that thou hast done *it*: thou wilt bring the day *that* thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me.

22 Let all their wickedness come before

reigns in the once thronged streets; and brooding over the ruins, with anguish too big for utterance, in melancholy solitude, Jerusalem, as a disconsolate widow, sits on the ground, deserted of God, her king a captive, her inhabitants dead with famine, pestilence, or the sword, or kept under the yoke of servitude in a strange land: a prince's once among the nations, courted, respected, and obeyed; now bound with captive bands, an ignominious tributary to a heathen lord. No marvel that tears incessant furrow her cheeks; and as if too short the day for sorrow such as her's, all night they flow, without a comforter, without a friend to pity her, and, by partaking, to alleviate her anguish. Her lovers, who in the days of her prosperity with warm professions testified their regard, desert her in the day of her calamity; and her treacherous friends throw off the mask, and act as open enemies. Her children groan in servitude; subject to the caprice and tyranny of heathen masters, and *finding no rest*, no end of toil, no peace of mind, no settled abode. Hemmed in like a beast in the toils, her persecutors have seized her, without the possibility of escape. *Her adversaries are the chief; her enemies prosper*: and no wonder, since *the Lord hath afflicted her*, whose wrath, on account of her manifold iniquities, is the cause of all her sufferings. Like harts famished for want of pasture, and weak as those timorous animals, her princes are unable to fight or fly, and fall an easy prey, despised now by those who honoured her; stripped of all her wealth and ornaments, her nakedness appears; and, confounded, *she sighs and turns backward*, as if to hide her shame. Pining with famine, and sunk in despondence, her people seek bread, and gladly part with all their jewels and pleasant things to procure the smallest refreshment; so low are they reduced, from that plenty wherein they once rioted, and which they so grievously abused. *Note*, (1.) They who wilfully depart from God, the soul's true rest, may not hope to find rest in any thing beside. (2.) All afflictions are doubly heavy when we see them as coming from God, not in mercy, but in wrath. (3.) Men's sins will surely bring them into straits, when too late they will bewail their folly. (4.) Affluence abused is the ready way to pining want.

2. Great were these miseries under which the state groaned; yet greater anguish to the gracious soul it was, to behold the sacred service of the temple interrupted. Unfrequented now, the ways of Zion mourn: her gates, no longer thronged by those who hastened to her solemn feasts, are deserted, desolate. *Her priests sigh*; no sacrifice bleeds, no incense smokes upon the altar; destitute of their portion, famishing through want: *her virgins are afflicted*; their songs of joy sunk into mourning and woe; and *she is in bitterness*, overwhelmed with anguish and distress. *Her beauty is departed*; not only her king and nobles captives, and her country wasted, but, above all, the beautiful house of her sanctuary in ruins. With sacrilegious hands her enemies have seized all her pleasant things, her ark, her

thee; and do unto them, as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions: for *my sighs are many*, and my heart *is faint*.

altars; and those, who might not even enter the congregation, now riot in the very sanctuary, plunder and spoil its sacred treasures, and, adding insult to their ravages, mocked at their sabbaths; or, as some think, in derision laid upon them on that day heavier burdens. And, what aggravated all, was, the remembrance of the happy days of old, fled, to appearance for ever fled, and nothing now remaining but affliction and misery. *Note*, (1.) Nothing affects a good man's heart so deeply as the decay of vital godliness. (2.) To hear God dishonoured, his worship and ordinances despised and ridiculed, is bitter to the pious soul. (3.) The remembrance of the communion that we have enjoyed with God, and the comforts that we have tasted, serve but to aggravate our griefs, when by our unfaithfulness we have provoked God to withdraw, and leave us to our misery.

3. He laments over their sins, the cause of these desolations; for God is righteous in these his judgments. Her transgressions are multiplied, and very grievous, numberless, and aggravated. *Her filthiness is in her skirts*, open and avowed: careless and secure, *she remembereth not her last end*, nor considers in what misery her iniquities will issue: and having been most oppressive herself, the rich afflicting their poor brethren, and making their servitude heavy, justly therefore she is devoted to the yoke, and her fall *wonderful*, as her provocations were excessive. *Note*, (1.) Sin and ruin are inseparable. (2.) No sins are so aggravated as those of God's professing people.

4. Zion is introduced, breaking forth into an earnest cry to God under her sufferings. *O Lord, behold my affliction*, with an eye of pity and compassion, since every other comforter is no more: *see, O Lord, and consider; for I am become vile*, reduced to the most abject misery, and ready to sink into despair, if thou dost not interpose. *Note*, (1.) The only relief for the miserable is earnest application to the merciful God. When all other compassions fail, his fail not. (2.) If God afflicts his believing people, it is in order to excite their more fervent applications to him, and make them know more of the wonders of his grace.

2dly, The same complaints are continued.

1. She demands some compassion from the spectators of her misery, in the view of the heavy hand of God upon her, whom she acknowledges to be the author of her troubles. *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? can you unconcerned behold these desolations, and not drop a tear over these ruins? see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow*; so bitter and overwhelming. How ready are we all in distress to think our own burden peculiarly heavy, when in fact we only share the calamities common to men: yet it must be owned, that her case was deplorable indeed. In anger, in fierce anger, the Lord had afflicted her; a sense of this added bitterness to every burden; his fire is kindled in her palaces, or burns with fiercer flames within her guilty conscience. Entangled in his net, she could not *see* away, but falls backward, faint, and unable to

## C H A P. II.

*Jeremiah lamenteth the misery of Jerusalem: he complaineth thereof to God.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**H**OW hath the LORD covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!

2 The LORD hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; he hath brought them down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof.

3 He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned

oppose the desolations of her Chaldean foe. Under complicated judgments, her yoke was made heavy, and her foul transgressions the cause of all; she was delivered into her enemies' hands, without the possibility of escaping. Her warriors, her valiant youth, and all her inhabitants, like grapes in the wine-press, are trodden under foot by the Babylonish army, and their blood shed on every side. *Note;* Whatever judgments weigh us down, we may be assured that our transgressions have wreathed the yoke, and bound on the burden.

2. She bewails with floods of tears her bitter anguish; and surely there is a cause for them. *For these things I weep;* both for her sin and her suffering; and particularly, [1.] *Because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me.* When God departs, our misery must needs be great: all other afflictions are made light by the sense of his presence and love; but when the comforter, the only comforter of the sinful soul, is far from us, and nothing appears but wrath and despair, then is our wretchedness as complete as it can be out of hell. [2.] *Because her children are desolate,* in captivity, or destroyed by the sword of the merciless enemy; unable to comfort her; yea, their sad fate is the cause of her torment. [3.] *Because she could not find a friend.* In vain she spread forth her hands, entreating help, and pleading for compassion: her lovers, who promised once so fair, deceived her, yea, shunned her, as if her touch communicated defilement, and none either cared or dared to interpose, when the destruction was by the divine decree, and her adversaries acted under his commission. *Note;* (1.) When God is our friend, we shall never want a comforter; if he be our enemy, none can comfort us. (2.) Creature-confidences are sure to fail us in the day of calamity. (3.) *Because of the terrible famine.* *My priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they sought their meat to relieve their souls;* and if these were perishing for want, how much more the people in general? (4.) *Because of the desolations that are beheld.* *Abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death,* inevitable from the famine and the pestilence. (5.) *Because of her insulting enemies.* They heard of her trouble, and with malicious pleasure rejoiced in it, and for these things her tears run down without intermission.

3. She justifies God in these his judgments. *The Lord is righteous;* however faithless her friends, or inhuman her foes, her sufferings were no more than she deserved: *for I have rebelled, grievously rebelled, against his commandment.* *Note;* True penitents ever acknowledge the justice

of God in punishing them; and never desire to excuse themselves, but speak of their sins with every aggravation.

4. She presents her miserable case to the God of all mercy. *Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress;* deeply afflicted, not only with her sufferings, but from a sense of her sins: *my bowels are troubled, mine heart is turned within me;* distracted and torn, uneasy and restless; and when the soul thus broken and contrite approaches God, he will not despise our prayer.

5. She expects and intreats that God would visit her enemies. *Thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called;* the time fixed in God's counsels for their punishment; and they shall be like unto me, in suffering; and as she believes this will come, she prays that it may. *Let all their wickedness come before thee;* be remembered and avenged: and do unto them as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions; as equally guilty, let them meet the same scourge, and heavy indeed that had been, as her anguish testified; *for my sighs are many, and my heart is faint.* *Note;* (1.) They who are alike guilty, may expect to be alike miserable. (2.) Though all private resentment is forbidden, we may pray to see God glorified in the ruin of his own and his people's enemies, that are obstinately, incorrigibly impenitent.

## C H A P. II.

THE prophet gives a melancholy detail of the dire effects of the divine anger in the subversion of both the civil and religious constitution of the Jews, and in that extreme wretchedness and distress, to which individuals of every denomination were thereby reduced. He represents the misery of his country as without a parallel, and charges her prophets with having betrayed her into ruin by their false and flattering suggestions. He describes the astonishment of passengers on viewing the desolated condition of Jerusalem. They call out to her to implore God's compassion for the removal of those heavy judgments, which in the height of his displeasure he had brought upon her.

*Ver. 1. The beauty of Israel]* "The temple and all its glory: and hath not spared the ark itself, the footstool of the Shechinah, which sat between the Cherubim, as on a throne." See Matt. xi. 23.

*Ver. 2. And hath not pitied]* *He hath not spared.* *Hou-*

*bigant.* *Ver. 3. He hath drawn back his right hand]* "He hath withdrawn his wonted assistance, and given up his people into the hands of their enemies." See Ps. lxxiv. 11.

*Ver.*

against Jacob like a flaming fire, *which* devoureth round about.

4 He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all *that were* pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire.

5 The LORD was as an enemy: he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces: he hath destroyed his strong holds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

6 And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as *if it were of* a garden: he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.

7 The LORD hath cast off his altar; he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the LORD, as in the day of a solemn feast.

8 The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together.

9 Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes *are* among the Gentiles: the

law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD.

10 The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, *and* keep silence: they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.

11 Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.

12 They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mother's bosom.

13 What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?

14 Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment.

15 All that pass by clap *their* hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, *saying*, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?

Ver. 6. *He hath—taken away his tabernacle*] *He hath laid waste his tabernacle as a garden.* Houbigant. See Isai. i. 8.

v. 5. Ver. 7. *They have made a noise, &c.*] “The Chaldeans have sent forth the sounds of joy on account of their victory, in the temple of the Lord, as the Jews were accustomed to do in their solemn festivals.” Instead of a joyful sound of praises and thankgivings to God, nothing was heard but the noise of soldiers, and the rude vociferations of infidels profaning the holy place and insulting the God who was worshipped there. See Pf. lxxiv. 4. and Calmet.

Ver. 11. *My liver, &c.*] Bishop Lowth explains it, “My vitals seem to be dissolved, and have lost all their strength.” See Job, xvi. 13. Pf. xxii. 14. The LXX. read *My glory is cast down upon the ground.* That the mental passions have a considerable influence upon the habit of the body in various instances, is a fact not to be ques-

tioned. And experience daily shews, that a violent uneasiness of mind tends greatly to promote a redundancy and overflowing of vitiated bile. The liver is the proper seat of the bile, where its secretions are carried on. Hence the prophet's meaning in this place seems to be, that he felt as if his whole liver was dissolved, and carried off in bile, on account of the copious discharge brought on by continual vexation and fretting. Job expresses the same thing, when he says, ch. xvi. 13. “He poureth out my gall upon the ground.”

Ver. 13. *What thing shall I take to witness for thee*] *With what likeness shall I compare thee?* “What instance can I bring of any calamity like thine? that such an example may be some mitigation of thy misery.” See Lowth, and Houbigant.

Ver. 14. *False burdens*] *Burdens of vanity—false prophecies.* See Isai. xiii. 1.

16 All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee: they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed *her* up: certainly this *is* the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen *it*.

17 The LORD hath done *that* which he had devised; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old: he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied;—and he hath caused *thine* enemy to rejoice over thee, he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries.

18 Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease.

19 Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the LORD: lift up thy hands towards him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street.

20 ¶ Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, *and* children of a span long? shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the LORD?

21 The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets: my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword; thou hast slain *them* in the day of thine anger; thou hast killed, *and* not pitied.

22 Thou hast called as in a solemn day my

*Ver. 17. That he had commanded, &c.]* “He hath fulfilled the threatening which he had denounced against those who were disobedient to the law of Moses, as well as what he had denounced long before by his prophets.”

*Ver. 18. Their heart cried.] Their heart crieth, O Lord, to the virgin, the daughter of Zion.* Houbigant. See his note.

*Ver. 20. Consider to whom thou hast done this.] Whether thou hast done the like to any one.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 22. Thou hast called, &c.]* “Terrors come upon me from every side by thy appointment, just as multitudes used to flock to Jerusalem at the time of the solemn feasts.” Houbigant renders it rather more clearly, *Thou hast called terrors on all sides, as to a solemn feast-day.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The hand of God visible in their sufferings; and the sense of his displeasure, so justly and highly provoked, peculiarly sharpened these lamentations.

The Lord hath utterly ruined their civil and ecclesiastical polity, and destroyed their country. A lowering cloud big with wrath hangs over the daughter of Zion, and terrible darkness covers her: all the beauty of Israel is tarnished, and from the highest pitch of excellence she falls into the abyss of wretchedness. Even that temple where God once chose to put his name, and that ark of the covenant over which his presence visibly rested, are no more regarded by him, but given up to destruction. *The habitations of Jacob, the land of Judæa, the Lord hath swallowed up, as a lion his prey, and hath not pitied. Their strong-holds are thrown down in his wrath;* for if he be angry, yea, but a little, who may abide it? They had polluted themselves by sin; therefore, *he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof, giving them up into the hands of the heathen. All their strength is broken, their right hand disabled; or God's right hand, which had been their protection and defence, is*

withdrawn, and they become a prey to their enemies; for when God abandons a people, their ruin is sure. Like a devouring fire his anger burns, and Jacob is devoured. As their enemy he stands, his arrows on the string pointed with death, his sword drawn and sharpened with fury; every pleasant object bleeds beneath the stroke, the princes, priests, and every endeared relation: and even in the *tabernacle of the daughter of Zion* his vengeance lighteth down, and it is utterly consumed. Before such an enemy what defence avails? her palaces, her fortresses, totter as in an earthquake, and disappear; while mournful lamentations rend the skies, and fill the devoted land of Judah. That temple, vast and magnificent, built for Jehovah's honour, is torn up from its foundations, as easily and utterly as a tent in a garden is removed: the places of assembly, the courts of the temple, or synagogues, are destroyed; God abhorred their hypocritical services, and therefore dispersed their congregations. Their solemn feasts and sabbaths are forgotten in Zion, none being left to celebrate them, no place for worship remaining. Even the sacred characters of king and priest God hath despised in the indignation of his anger; because they have defiled their dignity by their iniquities, he hath destroyed both the kingdom and the priesthood: the more sacred the character, the greater the profanation when such offend. *The Lord hath cast off his altar;* while they continued in their sins, the sacrifices and incense that they offered were an abomination unto him. *He hath abhorred the sanctuary,* and therefore devoted the walls to ruin; and in those sacred courts and temple, where Zion's songs were heard, there the Chaldeans shout, and riot, and blaspheme. Fixed is the purpose, deep the design; the line of destruction is marked out, and God's almighty hand never withdrawn till the desolations are completed, the wall and rampart levelled to the ground. Sunk are her gates, as if the earth had opened beneath them; her bars broken; *her king and her princes captives among the Gentiles: the law is no more;* the sacred tables broken, the ordinances no longer observed, and none left to expound or hear these oracles of God.



torments round about, so that in the day of the LORD's anger none escaped nor remained :

those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy confuted.

God. They who neglect their Bibles deserve to have them taken from them ; and since they abhorred and persecuted their prophets when they had them, God punishes them in withdrawing his prophetic spirit from among them, and leaves them in darkness.

2dly, Nothing breathes but lamentation, mourning, and woe.

1. The mourners and their bitter anguish are described. *The elders, who in robes of state were seated on the throne of judgment, now sit upon the ground with every expressive sign of sorrow, dust on their heads, and girded with sackcloth ; the virgins of Jerusalem, so sprightly once and gay, with downcast eyes and melancholy looks bemoan their miseries ; while the prophet himself, in deepest distress, wept till his eyes grew dim in their exhausted sockets ; his bowels troubled with acutest pangs of grief, and all within melted as it were through very anguish, for the destruction of the daughter of his people.*

2. Abundant cause appears for such bitter mourning.

[1.] The famine is very grievous. The infants swoon through hunger, and cry to their tender mothers for bread: unable to relieve their wants, the fond parents see them faint in the streets *as wounded* ; or clasping them to their bosom they expire there ; nay, more horrid still, driven by those cravings which silence even the strongest feelings of natural affection, the infant, murdered from the womb, is devoured by the famished mother. Well may we cry, in the view of such a scene, *from plague, pestilence, and famine, good Lord, deliver us !*

[2.] The sword of their enemy reeks with the blood of the slain : no sacredness of place or character affords protection. *The priest and prophet are slain in that sanctuary whither they fled for refuge ; neither young nor old are spared, and even virgins bleed in the general massacre. God's wrath had set their merciless enemies upon them : He no more pitied them, and suffered the hearts of their foes to be steeled against every feeling of humanity. Thick as the crowded worshippers assembled in the days of their solemnities, now their terrible enemies, summoned of God, beset them round : hemmed in on every side, none escaped nor remained, but were slain or made captives ; so that Zion, a childless widow, saw all the pains and care which she had bestowed on her helpless children fruitless, they being nourished only as lambs for the slaughter : and all this the Lord's doing, the effects of his fierce anger. How then should we fear to provoke this jealous God !*

[3.] Their prophets deluded them. Pretending to inspiration, they reported the dreams of their own foolish imaginations ; assuring the people of peace, instead of rebuking them for their iniquity ; flattering them in their sins, and hastening them to their ruin. *Note, (1.) No curse can be more heavy than to be given up to the delusions of lying prophets. (2.) They who prophecy smooth things, instead of shewing faithfulness to men's souls in rebuking their sins, evince the falsehood of their pretended mission.*

[4.] Their neighbours reproach, their enemies insult them. As if well pleased with their fall, those that pass by, hiss and wag the head, deriding their miseries ; *Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth ? Where now are those Jewish boasts ?—* With open mouths their enemies join the cry, blaspheming and reviling, *bissing as serpents, and gnashing their teeth, in testimony of their abhorrence ; they say, we have swaddled her up, delighted with the delicious repast, with the rich prey of Zion's palaces. Certainly this is the day that we looked for ; we have found, we have seen it ; with malicious joy they triumph, and think that they have prevailed to her everlasting destruction. But let the enemies of God's church know, that, though sunk never so low, she will revive, and their triumphing will be short.*

[5.] Their misery is unparalleled, their case to human view desperate ; no nation ever suffered the like calamities : to seek, as a ground of comfort, for afflictions similar to those which Zion had endured, were vain : *for thy breach is great like the sea, which, when it overflows, with violence irresistible deluges the country. Who can heal thee ? no human wisdom or power can repair these desolations.*

[6.] God himself appears their enemy. *The Lord hath done that which he had devised ; his hand hath done it, his counsel planned the blow : he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old ; for, when he gave them his holy law by Moses, he told them what would be the effects of their transgressions, Lev. xxvi. 17. Deut. xxviii. 20. which is now fulfilled. He hath thrown down, and hath not pitied, sparing neither city nor temple : he hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee, giving Jerusalem for a prey to their teeth : and for these miseries no wonder if their heart in anguish cried unto the Lord ; in some the voice of mere nature, lamenting their sufferings ; in others, it may be hoped, the voice of grace bewailing their sins.*

3. They are exhorted, as the only means of redress, in deep humiliation to seek unto God. He hath wounded, and he alone can heal. *O wall of the daughter of Zion, ye watchmen that stand thereon, and all others, let tears penitential run down like a river day and night ; give thyself no rest, weep incessantly, let not the apple of thine eye cease, till thou hast found pardon and grace. Arise, cry out in the night, importunate in prayer, and pleading hard with God for mercy, in the beginning of the watches, repeatedly and ceaseless till he vouchsafes an answer of peace ; pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord, lift up thy bands toward him, pour all thy griefs into his compassionate bosom, and urge every argument for pity, such as the groans of the infants expiring for hunger. Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this ; to the seed of Abraham thy friend, the sons of Jacob thy chosen, the people whom thou didst separate for thine own. Note ; We can take no step so effectual to remove our miseries, as spreading them in humble and fervent prayer before God. None but he can help us ; and none that ever truly sought him sought in vain.*

## C H A P. III.

*The faithful bewail their calamities. By the mercies of God they nourish their hope. They acknowledge God's justice. They pray for deliverance, and for justice on their enemies.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**I** AM the man *that* hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.

2 He hath led me and brought *me into* darkness, but not *into* light.

3 Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand *against me* all the day.

4 My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones.

5 He hath builded against me, and compasseth *me* with gall and travail.

6 He hath set me in dark places, as *they that be* dead of old.

7 He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.

8 Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.

9 He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked.

10 He *was* unto me *as* a bear lying in wait, *and as* a lion in secret places.

## C H A P. III.

IN this chapter the prophet seems to have had it in view to instruct his countrymen in the lesson of bearing themselves well under adversity. To this end, he first of all sets himself forth as an example of the most severe and trying afflictions. He then points out the inexhaustible mercies of God as the never-failing source of his consolation and hope; and exhorts others to patience and quiet resignation under the like circumstances, shewing that God is ever gracious to those that wait upon him; that he is prone to pardon and pity, and takes no delight in afflicting mankind; but turns away with disgust from all acts of oppression and malignant cruelty. He asserts the divine supremacy in the dispensations of good and evil, and argues that no man has a right to complain, when he is punished according to his deserts. He therefore recommends it to his fellow-sufferers to examine themselves, and turn to God with contrite hearts, sincerely deploring the sinfulness of their conduct, which had provoked the divine justice to treat them with such extraordinary severity. He professes himself deeply affected with the calamities of his country; but calling to mind the desperate circumstances from which he had heretofore been rescued by the divine aid, he declares his hope that the same good providence will frustrate the malice of his present enemies, and turn the scornful reproach they had cast upon him to their own confusion.

*Ver. 1. I am the man that hath seen affliction.]* The pro-

7

11 He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate.

12 He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.

13 He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.

14 I was a derision to all my people; *and* their song all the day.

15 He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.

16 He hath also broken my teeth with gravel-stones, he hath covered me with ashes.

17 And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity.

18 And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD:

19 Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

20 My soul hath *them* still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

21 This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

22 ¶ *It is of* the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

phet here speaks partly in his own character, and partly in that of his countrymen and fellow-sufferers; and throughout the whole in such a manner as agrees admirably with the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Jeremiah in his sufferings especially was a type. See *Isai. liiii. 3.* The reader will find most of the expressions in this chapter explained in the book of Job, and the Psalms.

*Ver. 5. Compassed me with gall and travail.] Broken my head, that I faint away.* Schultens.

*Ver. 13. The arrows of his quiver.] The sons of his quiver.* Houbigant. It is usual in the Hebrew to call the subject, adjunct, accident, effect, &c. the *son* of that particular thing. Hence it is that the Hebrew prophets represent nations, countries, and people, under the image of a woman; and it must be ascribed to the same principle, that *arrows* are here called the *sons of the quiver.* See Bishop Lowth's Prelections.

*Ver. 16. He hath—broken my teeth.] He hath broken my teeth as a gravel-stone. He hath fed me with dust.* Houbigant. In this and the preceding verse the prophet aggravates the calamities of his people by such expressions as imply that misery and affliction are poured without measure upon the sons of Jacob. Possibly he alludes to his personal afflictions. See *Jer. xxxvii. xxxviii.*

*Ver. 21. Therefore have I hope.]* Compare this with the 12th, 13th, and 14th verses of the 20th chapter of Jeremiah.

*Ver. 22. It is of the Lord's mercies.] This is the Lord's mercy,*

23 *They are new every morning : great is thy faithfulness.*

24 *The LORD is my portion faith my soul ; therefore will I hope in him.*

25 *The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.*

26 *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.*

27 *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*

28 *He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.*

29 *He putteth his mouth in the dust ; if so be there may be hope.*

30 *He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him : he is filled full with reproach.*

31 *For the LORD will not cast off for ever :*

32 *But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.*

33 *For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.*

34 *To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth.*

*mercy, that he hath not entirely consumed me ; neither are his compassions exhausted.*

*Ver. 27. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth]* We observed in the introduction to this book, that there are some commentators, and Michaelis among the rest, who conceive "that it was composed upon the death of king Josiah." They allege, that on an attentive perusal it will be found, that there is nothing in this book which might not have been written on the death of Josiah, which was a great calamity to his country : for Jerusalem, together with her new king, fell into the hands of the victor about three months after this misfortune, and was obliged to submit to a foreign prince, and to receive a tributary king from him ; all which cannot be supposed to have passed without a siege, and the ruin of the walls of Jerusalem. The author of the second book of Chronicles expressly asserts, chap. xxxv. 25. that Jeremiah lamented the death of Josiah, together with other poets ; and that his Lamentations and their elegies were reserved for the use of posterity. Why should we therefore doubt that this book contains those identical lamentations which are mentioned by the author of the book of Chronicles ? Or, what reason is there for referring them to another calamity, which, it does not appear, or at least we are not sure, that he ever celebrated ? To this we may add, that there are some things in the book of Lamentations which do not seem reconcileable to the time of Nebuchadrezzar, and to the time of the conflagration of the city and temple ; especially when he attempts to beguile or soothe his troubles, in the words of the present verse, *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* This expression is proper only for a young man, not for one who was advanced in years, as Jeremiah was in the 11th year of Zedekiah. As for the complaint, chap. v. 7. *Our fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have borne their iniquities,* Jeremiah could not have made use of it in the person of those who lived in the time of Zedekiah, without impeaching his piety ; for that race was far more vicious and depraved than their progenitors, and being deservedly punished for their personal crimes, there was no necessity to trace their calamities so far backward. This expression might with some justice, if ever it could, have been made use of by the Jews in the reign of Josiah, who was a very pious king, a reviver of true religion, and who brought back his people to the

worship of Jehovah, who had been offended by the sins of their forefathers, especially by those of Manasseh. In confirmation of this opinion, the reader is desired to refer to 2 Kings, xxiii. 25, 26. Such are the proofs by which Michaelis and others support their opinion. The reader will consider what has been advanced on the other side, and judge for himself. We shall take notice of chap. v. 7. when we come to it. As to the present verse, the argument drawn from it does not appear to carry great weight. The plain meaning of it seems to be, that it is useful and advantageous for a man to have been inured, even from his earliest days, to those restraints which arise from the sense of the duty we owe to God, and of the obedience we ought to pay to his laws, as well as to those afflictions which are the school of virtue, holiness, and piety.

*Ver. 28. Because he hath borne it upon him]* *When he shall take up his yoke.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 29. He putteth his mouth in the dust]* "He prostrates himself even to the ground in token of the deepest humiliation." See Isai. xxix. 4. 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

*Ver. 30. He giveth his cheek, &c.]* He not only humbles himself in the sight of his Maker, but also bears with patience the ill-treatment of men. See Matt. xxvi. 62. Mark, xiv. 65..

*Ver. 33. For he doth not afflict willingly]* Houbigant reads this, *For he doth not afflict willingly, or oppress the sons of men ; so far as, (ver. 34.) To crush under his feet, &c.* ver. 36. *To subvert a man in his cause, saying, The Lord seeth not.*

*Ver. 34. All the prisoners of the earth]* *All the prisoners of the land.* By "the prisoners of the land," I am persuaded are meant the poor insolvent debtors, whom their creditors among the Jews, as well as among other nations, were empowered to cast into prison, and oblige to work out the debt ; a power too often exerted with great rigour and inhumanity. See Matt. xviii. 30, 34. The sufferings of these persons seem to be alluded to Isai. lviii. 3. where the people asking with surprise, why their voluntary fastings and acts of self-mortification were so little noticed and regarded by God, receive for answer, that while they laid themselves under restraint in one point, they indulged their vicious passions and inclinations of different kinds, and shewed not that forbearance in their treatment of others, which they hoped to experience at the hand of God.

*Ver.*

35 To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High,

36 To subvert a man in his cause, the LORD approveth not.

37 ¶ Who is he *that* saith, and it cometh to pass, *when* the LORD commandeth it not?

38 Out of the mouth of the most High, proceedeth not evil and good?

39 Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins.

40 Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

41 Let us lift up our heart with *our* hands unto God in the heavens.

42 We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned.

43 Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied.

44 Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that *our* prayer should not pass through.

45 Thou hast made us *as* the off-scouring and refuse in the midst of the people.

46 All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.

47 Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction.

48 Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

49 Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission;

50 Till the LORD look down, and behold from heaven.

51 Mine eye affecteth mine heart because of all the daughters of my city.

52 Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause.

53 They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me.

54 Waters flowed over mine head; *then* I said, I am cut off.

55 ¶ I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon.

56 Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.

57 Thou drewest near in the day *that* I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.

58 O LORD, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.

59 O LORD, thou hast seen my wrong: judge thou my cause.

60 Thou hast seen all their vengeance *and* all their imaginations against me.

61 Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD, *and* all their imaginations against me;

62 The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day.

63 Behold their sitting down, and their rising up; I *am* their musick.

*Ver. 36. To subvert a man in his cause]* That is, to prevent his having justice done him in a law-suit or controversy by any undue interference; as by bearing or suborning false witnesses, or exerting any kind of influence in opposition to truth and right.

*Ver. 37. Who is he that saith]* "The king of Babylon, and such haughty tyrants, may boast of their power, as if it were equal to that of Omnipotence itself. But still it is God's prerogative to bring to pass whatever he pleases, only by speaking or declaring his purpose."

*Ver. 39. Wherefore doth a living man complain]* If we consider God's afflictions as a just punishment of our evil doings, we shall never murmur or repine at Providence; and we ought to be thankful, however bitter afflictions may be, for having an opportunity given to repent. This verse may be otherwise interpreted, as connected with that preceding. See Calmet.

*Ver. 43. Thou hast covered with anger, &c.] Thou hast fenced about with anger.* The verb *סָכַח* *sakak* appears to have this sense, Job, iii. 23. x. 11. xxxviii. 8. There seems to be a manifest allusion to the manner of hunting wild beasts in the eastern countries, by surrounding at first

a large tract of ground with toils, which the beasts could not break through; and these being drawn in by degrees, the beasts were driven into a narrower space, where they were killed with darts and javelins, at the will of the hunters. See Bishop Lowth's Note on Isai. xxiv. 17, 18. Statius gives a description, exactly similar, of the method of inclosing wild beasts in toils or nets; Achill. l. 459.

*Ver. 48. Runneth down with]* *Bathes in.* Schultens.

*Ver. 51. Affecteth]* *Preys upon.*

*Ver. 52. Mine enemies chased me]* The prophet in this and the following verses describes his own sufferings, when his enemies seized him, and cast him into the dungeon. See Jer. xx. 7. xxxvii. 15. He compares them to a fowler who is in pursuit of a bird, as they took every opportunity to deprive him of his life or liberty, and that without any provocation on his part. See Lowth, and Calmet.

*Ver. 56. My breathing]* *My groaning, or sighing.*

*Ver. 62. The lips, &c.] The words of those that rise up against me, and their daily songs upon me.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 63. I am their musick]* *The subject of their songs.* See ver. 14. and Houbigant; who renders the three following verses, as do many other versions, in the future tense.

64 ¶ Render unto them a recompence, O LORD, according to the work of their hands.

65 Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet here mingles his lamentations over his own sufferings with those of the people; or he personates the church in general: and some, with good appearance of reason, suppose him herein a type of Christ.

1. He laments over his afflictions as singularly heavy, embittered with a sense of the wrath of God.

2. Darkness surrounded him: he saw no light, no cheering beam of hope, no door of escape out of his miseries, and seemed as one already in the grave; which may refer to the dark dungeon in which he was shut up; or to the captivity of the people, wherein they thought themselves as buried among the heathen.

3. God appears his enemy. He is the butt of all the arrows of his indignation; so sorely was the land afflicted with all that variety of judgments which seemed as it were to exhaust God's quiver. And herein the prophet seems not to speak of himself, but personates his people.

4. God hath shut him up in the hand of his enemies, hedged him in with their forces, bukkled the mounts against him, and compassed him with gall and travail; every effort to disentangle himself only riveted the chain the faster, and made it the more heavy. His ways are inclosed as with heaven stone, he cannot break through; all his schemes are traversed, and all his paths crooked; the farther he advances, the more he is bewildered. Note; Such will the crooked paths of sin be found; the farther we go in them, the more miserable shall we grow.

5. The Lord seemed to have made an utter end of him, emaciated through famine, and his strength broken. As a lion and a bear waiting to seize their prey, so God seemed to watch over him for evil. He was filled with bitterness under the sense of what he felt, and with the apprehension of the greater evils that he feared; and staggered as one drunk with affliction; covered with ashes, in the dust he lay, and ate worse than the bread of mourners, his teeth broken with gravel-stones, which were mingled with the meal; nay, he hath pulled me in pieces, as one torn limb from limb. Thus had God dispersed the Jews, and laid their land utterly desolate.

6. The Lord refused to be intreated. The loudest cries are in vain; he would neither hear the prophet's intercession, nor the people's prayer for themselves; and, when prayer fails of profiting, the case appears desperate indeed.

7. He was a derision to all the people: they mocked at and made merry with him, ridiculing his sorrows, and pleased with his sufferings; and to a generous spirit very hard is this to be borne.

8. He almost sunk into despair. Thou hast removed my soul far off from peace; no prospect of it remained: I forgot prosperity, not expecting its return: and I said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord; abandoned by him, and no more expecting help and support from him; and then despair was unavoidable; and this arose from the view of his affliction and misery, which seemed more than he was able to bear.

9. The Lord Jesus was emphatically this man of sorrows, destitute, afflicted, tormented, stricken, smitten of

God, enduring all the wrath which our iniquities deserved; derided in his agony, his soul in darkness and dereliction when he hung upon the cross, and his misery complete.

2dly, At last a gleam of cheering hope breaks through the dreadful gloom. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me; and real humiliation is the sure way to returning consolation: or the words may be more truly rendered, Thou wilt surely remember, expressing his faith in God, notwithstanding all his sorrows; or, my soul meditates within me; on thy grace, mercy, truth, and faithfulness; this I recal to my mind, therefore have I hope, which still excludes despair. A variety of reasons he suggests to encourage this hope, and comfort his heart in God.

1. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, as we have deserved to be. It is mercy, infinite mercy, which spares any sinner for a moment: we may wonder that we are out of hell, and be ashamed to complain, when all temporal affliction is so much less than our iniquity deserves. His compassions fail not, though sometimes they seem exhausted, and his loving-kindness quite gone for evermore; yet it is our infirmity, yea, our sin, when we fear it, and a little patience will prove it so; for they are new every morning, both temporal mercies, which every day fall thick around us as the drops of dew, and spiritual mercies in Christ Jesus, the source of which is inexhaustible.

2. Great is thy faithfulness. His truth confirms what his mercy promises; and, however obscure his present dispensations may be, he never fails them who simply, believingly, and perseveringly, cast all their dependance upon him.

3. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. Since God hath engaged to be such to his believing people, faith embraces the promise; and they who have an interest in his love and favour have all that heart can wish, and a possession which, when we are deprived of every earthly good, is enough to make us happy, and satisfy all our wishes. Therefore will I hope in him, when every other support fails. And this hope will never make us ashamed, for the Lord is good unto them that wait for him, and will not disappoint their expectations, bestowing on them, according to their necessities, a rich supply for every want; to the soul that seeketh him, in earnest prayer and humble perseverance, in the use of those means of grace which he has appointed; for, though the answer may be delayed, the mercy is sure to be granted to all who hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord; not murmuring against God, but acquiescing in his holy will, patiently expecting his salvation, temporal, spiritual, and eternal; for it is good to do so; our highest interest as well as our bounden duty.

4. Our very troubles are designed of God for our benefit. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth: the yoke of afflictions, which serves to wean the mind from earthly vanities, and teach us to seek our better rest above; or the yoke of the commandments, Christ's easy yoke, which the sooner we take upon us, from the earliest days of youth, the pleasanter we shall find it: though the former sense seems here particularly intended. Such a

66 Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the LORD.

#### C H A P. IV.

*Zion bewaileth her pitiful estate: she confesseth her sins. Edom is threatened. Zion is comforted.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**H**OW is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones

one sitteth alone, retired to commune with God, to search out his own spirit, and to see and humble his soul under the cause of his afflictions; and keepeth silence, no murmuring word escapes him, he is dumb and openeth not his mouth, because he hath borne it upon him, willingly yielding his neck to the yoke; or, because he (God) hath laid it on him, and therefore this consideration silences every thought of discontent. He putteth his mouth in the dust, confessing his vileness, and just desert of all that he suffers, and humbly bows before the chastening rod, if so be there may be hope, or peradventure there is hope; not as if doubting of the promises, but as confessing his own unworthiness to obtain the mercy that he seeks. Thus humbled, he giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him, can bear without resentment every indignity; he is filled full with reproach, the lot of all who follow Christ; he never returns railing for railing, however, but contrariwise blessing, learning of him to be meek and lowly of heart. Such is the spirit and temper of a real penitent; and the issue of such sufferings and submission cannot but be good, very good for us.

5. The Lord will not cast off for ever, which is the great argument for patience to every returning penitent; for without repentance and faith on our part, he cannot bless us consistently with his nature and perfections. Our heaviness, indeed, for a time, may be great, through manifold temptations; but though he cause grief, his chastisements all flow from his paternal heart towards those who cast themselves upon him in Christ Jesus, and are designed to work godly sorrow which leads to eternal salvation; and therefore, when the end of the affliction is answered, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies, which are in Christ Jesus boundless and infinite to all the faithful; for with no other view does he ever correct his dear children; he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men, he takes no delight in our miseries; by our unfaithfulness we provoke him, as a tender father, with reluctance to take the rod; but he feels for us when he chastises, is grieved in our affliction, and gladly lays down the rod when it has answered the end for which he sent it. O how great are the tender mercies of our God! How can we do other than kiss the rod of such a father!

6. Though he permits, for wise and holy ends, the oppression of the wicked, he is far from approving it. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth, as the Chaldeans trampled on his captive people, to turn aside the right of a man by partial judgment, before the face of the Most High, openly, in defiance of him whose vicegerents the judges of the earth are, to subvert a man in his cause by some clandestine and knavish arts, the Lord approveth not;

of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.

2 The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!

3 Even the sea-monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

he condemns all such injustice, and will avenge it; or doth he not see? however secret the transaction, from his all-piercing eye it cannot be hid, and he will in no wise spare the guilty.

3dly, They who truly know God and themselves will find abundant arguments for submission to his will and pleasure.

1. He is the uncontrollable sovereign. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? His counsels only can take effect: nothing can contradict his appointing, permissive or suffering will. Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good? Affuredly. Every dispensation of his providence, prosperous or afflictive, is most holy, just, and good: whatever, therefore, be his will should be our delight.

2. We have never reason to complain. Wherefore doth a living man complain? a worm, whose breath is in his nostrils, and in whose heart folly is bound up; a most incompetent judge of the dispensations of infinite wisdom; a living man, whose life has long since been forfeited to divine justice, and to whom it is an amazing act of mercy that he is out of hell; a man for the punishment of his sins? how dare he complain, when all his sufferings here are so much less than his deserts: considerations these, which should ever silence all repining, lead us to acknowledge God's mercy as well as justice in our severest afflictions, and thankfully to acquiesce in every dispensation.

3. Our business under every trouble is, to examine into the cause, and in deep humiliation return unto God. Let us search and try our ways; for, though at all times self-inquiry is needful, it is most peculiarly so under humbling providences; for verily there is a reason for them; a gracious God doth not willingly afflict. The rule of judgment is the word of God; and prayer must direct us to the right application of it, that, under the influence of divine light, we may discover the true state of our souls, and turn again to the Lord in whatever way we may have departed from him; knowing, that except we are converted we cannot be saved; and assured that, in all his dealings toward us, God's great design is to lead us to repentance. Blessed and happy are they who learn to correspond with him herein.

4. In simplicity and godly sincerity we are called upon to devote and surrender ourselves to God. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens; in prayer looking up to him whose glory is in the heavens, and whose throne ruleth over all; our hearts engaged, and unreservedly offered on his altar; without which no service of the lips is at all available; and when we do so, this sacrifice of a contrite

4 The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them.

contrite spirit God will not despise, nor ever cast out the prayer that cometh not out of feigned lips.

4thly, Nature will feel, and we are not forbid to mourn, though we are forbid to murmur.

1. The prophet, in the name of all his people, with deep acknowledgment confesses their sins; *We have transgressed and have rebelled*; for sin is rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven, and sinners the vilest of traitors.

2. He bewails their miseries, arising from a sense of God's displeasure. *Thou hast not pardoned*; at least no tokens of it appeared, while their afflictions continued unremoved: *thou hast covered with anger and persecuted us*; like a thick cloud it hung over them, and extinguished for a while every ray of his light and comfort; while, like a battering storm, their troubles beat upon them incessantly. *Thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied*; given them up to the mercile's sword of the Chaldeans; nor did their cries apparently reach his mercy-seat. *Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through*; so apt are we when we do not find an answer of mercy from God soon, to conclude that it is of no profit to pray, and are tempted to give up all hope.

3. He laments the derision to which they were exposed. *Thou hast made us as the off-scouring and refuse in the midst of the people*; to be trodden down by the heathen, see 1 Cor. iv. 13. and their enemies scoffed at their distress; a sure symptom of a base mind, thus to insult the miserable.

4. Their fears were great, their desolations grievous: taken in the snare of their foes; terrified with their threatenings; their land and the cities of Judah utterly destroyed, and the people led into captivity, or slain with famine, pestilence, and the sword. Chased like a bird, they fled before their foes, who *without cause* persecuted them; yet, unable to escape, they seized them, and buried them alive in dungeons; or carried them alive to Babylon, which was the house of their prison, and shut them up in captive bonds, as the dead, at the mouth of whose sepulchre the ponderous stone is laid. *Waters of affliction flowed over mine head*; and, sunk as it were in the abyss of hopeless misery, *then I said, I am cut off*, ready to resign themselves to despair. *Note*; Many whom Satan has cast down by their sins, he seeks to keep down by despair.

5. In this state of wretchedness the prophet, in the person of the church, and on her account, weeps bitterly. *Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water*; unutterable is his anguish for the destruction that he beheld: without intermission *mine eye trickleth down*; and every scene of desolation that presented itself pierced his heart with fresh anguish, and drew forth a new torrent of tears over *all the daughters of his city*, or, *more than all the daughters of my people*; none, even of the tender sex, were so deeply affected and profuse in tears as the prophet; and thus he resolved to continue weeping and praying, *till the Lord should look down and behold from heaven*, and pity, pardon, and deliver them. *Note*; (1.) Let nothing drive us from waiting upon God. (2.) Our hearts will find no such relief from their anguish, as by pouring our sorrows into the bosom of a compassionate God. (3.) If we continue instant and patient

in prayer, we shall assuredly find at last an answer of peace.

5thly, Sad as their state was, it was still within the reach of prayer; and therefore,

1. The prophet cries unto God, *I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon*; which may refer to the prophet's own case, when ready to perish in this miserable situation; or may be his prayer for the people, reduced now to the deepest distress. *Thou hast heard my voice*; it is the expression of his humble confidence, or the encouragement that he drew from past experience; thou hast heard, and wilt hear, the prayer of faith, therefore *hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry*, in the present calamity: or it may be read, *Thou didst not hide*, &c. and so is a continuation of his grateful acknowledgment of past mercies. *Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee*, manifesting thy gracious presence and support: *thou saidst, Fear not*; and that encouraged my drooping heart. *O Lord, thou hast pleaded the cause of my soul, thou hast redeemed my life*; rescuing him from the instant death which threatened him in the dungeon; or delivering the people from their oppressions under the yoke of Egypt, Philistia, and other nations; and this emboldened his hope that the Lord would yet deliver them. *Note*; (1.) There is no prison so deep; but prayer can find a ready way out of it to the throne of God. (2.) Past mercies should encourage present hope: (3.) That is the effectual prayer, when the soul *breaketh forth* its fervent desires, and still feels more than it can utter. (4.) They who by faith commit their souls to God, need fear no evil.

2. He refers his case and his people's unto the Lord: God had seen the wrong that his enemies had done him, their malicious designs, and their revengeful spirit: he had heard their reproaches and insults, and how they daily made themselves merry in deriding him; and therefore he appeals to him for judgment against them, not in a spirit of revenge, but that the justice of God may be seen in the righteous retaliation of their unprovoked malignity. *Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them*, the heaviest of all plagues, and the just desert of their wickedness. *Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the Lord*, their deeds of darkness having made them unworthy of the light of day. *Note*; (1.) Though fools still mock on, and sport at God's people, the day is near when their mirth will be turned into mourning. (2.) Woe to those against whom God's oppressed people appeal to him for justice.

#### C H A P. IV.

THE prophet contrasts, in various affecting instances, the wretched and deplorable circumstances of the Jewish nation with the flourishing state of their affairs in former times; and ascribes the unhappy change principally to the profligacy of their priests and prophets, which had drawn upon them the universal abhorrence of God and man. The people proceed with lamenting their hopeless condition, and in a particular manner the captivity of their sovereign. The judgment of Edom is at length foretold, together with a final cessation of Sion's calamities.



5 They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: *they that were* brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.

6 For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, *that was* overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.

7 Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing *was* of sapphire:

8 Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick.

9 *They that be* slain with the sword are better than *they that be* slain with hunger; for these pine away, stricken through for *want* of the fruits of the field.

10 The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

11 The LORD hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.

12 The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

13 ¶ For the sins of her prophets, *and* the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her;

14 They have wandered *as* blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments.

15 They cried unto them, Depart ye; *it is* unclean; depart, depart, touch not: when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn *there*.

16 The anger of the LORD hath divided them; he will no more regard them. They respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders.

17 As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our

*Ver. 1. How is the gold become dim! &c.]* "How is the "glory of the temple obscured! The sanctuary, which "was overlaid with gold, now lies in the ruins." Some think that the prophet here alludes to the princes and chief persons of the country. See the next verse, and Pf. cxix. 83.

*Ver. 3. Sea-monsters—give suck to their young ones]* See Job, xxxix. 13, 14. and Parkhurst on the word אָנָה *anah*. We are told by voyagers, that the sea lioness, and other sea-monsters, have dug with which they give suck.

*Ver. 5. They that did feed delicately, &c.]* See the note on 1 Sam. ii. 8. where it has been observed that it was usual in the east to burn dried dung, and consequently to lay up heaps of it for use in their cottages. The author of the *Observations* thinks that this will serve to explain the expression in this verse of *embracing dunghills*. "This "taking refuge in dunghills (says he) is not mentioned "in European descriptions of the horrors of war; but if "they in the east burned *dung* anciently, as much as they "do now, and preserved a stock of it with the solicitude of "these times, it will appear quite natural to complain "that those who had *fed delicately*, were wandering with- "out food in the ways; and they who had been covered "not only with clean garments, but with robes of mag- "nificence, were forced by the destruction of their "palaces, to take up their abode in places designed for "the reception of this sort of *turf*, and to sit down "upon those heaps of *dried dung*." See *Observations*, p. 137.

*Ver. 6. And no hands stayed on her]* *Nor were hands*

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*weakened in her*. Sodom was destroyed by a sudden act of God which the prophet thinks preferable to lingering and wasting with disease and want, as was the case in Jerusalem during the long siege.

*Ver. 7. They were more ruddy, &c.]* *They were brighter in body than pearls, &c.* See Bochart, lib. ii. cap. 6.

*Ver. 9. For these pine away]* *For they who are cut down by the sword, have departed quickly as the fruits of the field:* "They who have perished by the sword, are quickly cut "down like the ripe fruits of the field; and therefore it "is better with them than with those who have wasted "away by a long famine." Houbigant.

*Ver. 10. The hands, &c.]* *The hands of tender-hearted women have boiled their own children: they served them for meat in their calamity, &c.*

*Ver. 12. The kings of the earth]* Jerusalem was so strongly fortified both by art and nature, and had been so often miraculously preserved by God from the attempts of its enemies, that it seemed almost incredible that it should suffer so total a subversion. See Calmet.

*Ver. 14, 15. So that men could not touch their garments]* *It could not be avoided but their garments must be touched.* Therefore the prophet immediately addresses the citizens of Jerusalem, ver. 15. *Depart, proclaim ye their uncleanness; depart, depart, touch not, that they may fly away and wander. Say among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn there.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 17. As for us, our eyes as yet failed]* *While we yet continued, our eyes failed with the vain expectation of help.* Houbigant.

*Ver.*

vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation *that* could not save us.

18 They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.

19 Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.

20 The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, was taken in their pits, of whom

we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz; the cup also shall pass through unto thee: thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked.

22 ¶ The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins.

*Ver. 19. Our persecutors, &c.]* The Lord hath brought upon us the judgment that he threatened by Moses, of bringing a nation against us, as swift as the eagle's flesh; for such are the Chaldean horsemen. See Jer. iv. 13. xlviii. 40. xlix. 22.

*Ver. 20. The breath of our nostrils, &c.]* That is to say, *Our king*; namely Zedekiah, whose flight the Chaldean soldiers intercepted, and on whose account the captive Jews hoped that their servitude would be lighter. So long as he was safe they might hope to preserve some face of religion and government. Calmet observes, that nothing can be more applicable than these words to our Lord Jesus Christ. This divine Saviour, the source of our life, the Lord and Master of the universe, the object of our love, and the Anointed of the Father, voluntarily delivered up himself for our sins; and has delivered us from death by the price of his life and blood.

*Ver. 21. Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom]* This is an ironical expression against the Edomites, who had joined themselves to the Chaldeans in the siege of Jerusalem. See Ps. cxxvii. 7. Obad. ver. 10.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Who can, unaffected, behold the desolations here described?

1. The temple is laid in ruins; the gold tarnished, the stones of the demolished sanctuary scattered on every side. Which may also be understood figuratively, as in the next verse, of *the precious sons of Zion*, who possessed immortal souls, comparable to *fine gold* for their worth, but now broken by the Chaldeans as an earthen pitcher, and lying slain in every street of the city.

2. People of all ranks and ages perish in the famine. *The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst*, the famished mother's breasts are dry, and, unable to moisten their lips, they seemed more cruel than the sea-monsters, or the ostriches of the wilderness. The weaned infant cried for bread, and the distressed parent hath it not to give; or, pressed by insufferable hunger, is deaf to his lisping, and cannot spare the least morsel. They who were used to every delicacy that affluence could procure, and were brought up in scarlet, or upon scarlet carpets spread under them, now wander in the street, and rake the dunghills for the vilest scraps to appease their raging appetite: to such distresses may the greatest be reduced. Their Nazarites, who were separated for God, and abstained with nicest care from every defilement; or her

nobles, as some interpret it, who were so elegant and curious, white as snow, ruddy as rubies, and their skins smooth as polished sapphire; now, black with famine, grief, and melancholy, are so changed, that their visage is no longer known, withered and destitute of all moisture as a dry stick: perishing miserably for want, a lingering death more terrible than the sword, multitudes fall on every side, while, driven by raging hunger, horrible to tell! even mothers murder their infants, and ravenously feed upon the fadden corpses.

3. The cause of all is the sin of Jerusalem, provoking the fierce anger of the Lord; and now his fury poured out has accomplished her ruin. Greater than Sodom's punishment is her's because more aggravated her sins: that devoted city never enjoyed those means which Jerusalem had slighted; therefore her overthrow, though terrible, was sudden; while, by a lingering death upon the rack, the destruction of Zion is completed.

4. They who behold these desolations are astonished. So strong the fortrefs, so numerous the forces, so highly honoured by the residence of the great God, so signally before rescued by his interposition, the kings of the neighbouring nations never conceived it possible for the Chaldeans to have prevailed. Nor could they, if Zion's defence had not first departed, and God been turned against her as an enemy; and then no marvel that ruin terrible and remediless overtook her.

2dly, We have,

1. The principal cause of Jerusalem's destruction. *The sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests*, who, while by office and profession they should have reformed others, were the great examples and encouragers of iniquity, and filled up fast the measure of the national guilt. *They shed the blood of the just*, being the first to persecute God's faithful ones, especially the true prophets, who remonstrated against their wickedness. *They wandered as blind men in the streets*, pretending to lead others while themselves were bewildered in error, ignorance, and sin; and, thus polluted with blood, every good man shunned their company as defiling, and cried unto all near them to beware of them, as if their touch or breath communicated infection; *depart ye, it is unclean, touch not*: and in the lands whither they were carried captive, these destroyers of their country were marked with a peculiar brand of infamy; *they said among the heathen, they shall no more sojourn there*, God having decreed, concerning these false teachers, that they should die

die

## C H A P. V.

*A pitiful complaint of Zion in prayer unto God.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**R**EMEMBER, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach.

die in the land of their captivity, and never see or partake of the restoration which God had promised to his people. Under God's peculiar wrath they were now divided and dispersed; and as he will no more regard them, neither shall they find any respect or favour from their heathen masters: or the last words of ver. 16. may be interpreted as their sin, as well as punishment: they had created with contempt God's true and faithful ministers, and therefore they themselves justly receive the same. *Note;* (1.) Wicked priests and prophets, more than any others, conspire to hasten a nation's ruin. (2.) We cannot keep at too great a distance from their company, whose evil communications tend to corrupt and destroy the soul.

2. In the time of their calamity all help failed this unhappy people. They expected assistance from the Egyptians, but in vain; eagerly they looked for their advancing to raise the siege, till their eyes failed; and too late they found their case desperate, and that their allies *could not save* them from the Chaldean army: their mounts were raised so high that they overlooked the walls; and if but a person appeared in the streets, they pursued him with their slings and arrows as a beast is hunted. Their end *was near*, it now was evident that they could not hold out long; the days appointed by the prophetic word were near expiring, and then the fearful end of Zion must come. Flight was useless, when, swifter than eagles, their persecutors pursued; nor could the mountain or wilderness afford a covert from their piercing eyes; nay, even their king himself found no protection for his sacred person; and all their flattering hopes, that under his protection they should be safe amid the surrounding heathen nations, now vanished as a dream: they behold him seized, his eyes put out, and he led away in brazen fetters a miserable captive. Some have applied this as if it had a reference to Christ, the anointed Saviour, seized by the hands of his enemies and slain, while his disheartened disciples, beholding the scene, were ready to abandon themselves to despair.

3. A gracious promise closes the lamentation, so doleful and full of misery. Edom had maliciously rejoiced at Zion's fall; and with pointed irony the prophet bids them continue their joy; but lets them know, that of the cup of vengeance which Jerusalem had tasted they themselves must drink, and sink down as a drunken man overpowered with liquor, under the fury of the Lord; helpless be stripped of all their treasures and ornaments, and driven naked as slaves before their conquerors: and while Zion's punishment has an end, and she is restored, no more to be a captive, the iniquity of Edom shall still be visited, and

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2 Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens.

3 We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers *are* as widows.

4 We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us.

5 Our necks *are* under persecution: we labour, *and* have no rest.

her sins discovered in the punishment inflicted on her. And what is here said seems to look to future times, Edom being the figure of the antichristian powers, as Zion is of the church of God. The Jews, after their return from Babylon, were, we know, led captive again, and are to this day in a state of bondage; but when Rome, the spiritual Edom, shall be destroyed, then shall the church be triumphant, and never know the yoke of captivity any more.

## C H A P. V.

*Ver. 1. Remember, O Lord*] In the Vulgate, Arabic, and Syriac, this chapter is intitled, "The prayer of Jeremiah." It is rather to be understood as the earnest supplication of the whole body of the Jews in their captivity. See the introductory note to this book.

*Ver. 4. Our wood is sold unto us*] *Our wood came at a price upon our necks; ver. 5. We are under persecution, &c.* Houbigant. That numbers of the Israelites had no wood growing on their own lands for their burning, must be imagined from the openness of their country. See Judg. v. 6. It is certain, the eastern villagers have now sometimes little or none on their premises. Dr. Russel says, that inconsiderable as the stream which runs by Aleppo and the gardens about it may appear, they however contain almost the only trees which are to be met with for twenty or thirty miles round; for that the villages are all destitute of trees, and most of them only supplied with what rain water the inhabitants can save in cisterns. D'Arvieux gives us to understand, that several of the present villages of the holy land are in the same situation; for, after observing that the Arabs burn cow-dung in their encampments, he adds, that all the villagers who live in places where there is a scarcity of wood, take great care to provide themselves with sufficient quantities of this kind of fuel. See 1 Sam. ii. 8. The holy land, from the accounts we have of it, appears to have been as little wooded anciently as at present; nevertheless the Israelites seem to have burned wood very commonly, and without buying it too, from what the prophet says in the present verse. Had they been wont to buy their fuel, they would not have then complained of it as such a hardship. The true account of it seems to be this. The woods of the land of Israel being from very ancient times common, the people of the villages, which, like those about Aleppo, had no trees growing in them, supplied themselves with fuel out of these wooded places, of which there were many anciently, and several that still remain. This liberty of taking wood in common, the Jews suppose to have been one of the constitutions of Joshua, of which they give us ten; the first giving liberty to an Israelite to feed his flock in the woods of any tribe; the second,

6 We have given the hand *to* the Egyptians, *and to* the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.

7 Our fathers have sinned, *and are* not; and we have borne their iniquities.

8 Servants have ruled over us: *there is* none that doth deliver *us* out of their hand.

9 We gat our bread with *the peril of* our lives because of the sword of the wilderness.

10 Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine.

11 They ravished the women in Zion, *and* the maids in the cities of Judah.

12 Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honoured.

13 They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood.

14 The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their mulick.

15 The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning.

16 The crown is fallen *from* our head: woe unto us that we have sinned!

17 For this our heart is faint; for these *things* our eyes are dim.

18 Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it.

19 Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation.

20 Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, *and* forsake us so long time?

21 Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.

22 But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us.

second, that he should be free to take wood in the fields any where. But though this was the ancient custom in Judæa, it was not so in the country into which they were carried captives; or if this text of Jeremiah respects those who continued in their own country for a while under Gedaliah, as the ninth verse insinuates, it signifies that their conquerors possessed themselves of these woods, and would allow no fuel to be cut down without leave, and that leave was not to be obtained without money. It is certain that presently after the return from the captivity timber was not to be cut without leave: Neh. ii. 8. See *Observations*, p. 218.

*Ver. 6. We have given the hand*] *We have submitted.*

*Ver. 7. Our fathers have sinned*] That is, "Though our fathers have been guilty of great sins, they have died without signal punishment and calamities; which are come upon us their children, who thus bear the punishment of theirs, as well as of our own iniquities." See Dan. ix. 8. 11, &c. This seems to be the plain meaning of the present verse; and if so, it certainly gives no countenance to the interpretation in the note on chap. iii. 27. See Ezck. ii. 3.

*Ver. 9. With the peril of our lives, &c.*] I can no otherwise understand this, than that on account of their weak and defenceless state the people were continually exposed, while they followed their necessary business, to the incursions of the Arabian freebooters, who might not be improperly styled, "the sword of the wilderness." See Harmer's *Observ.* ch. ii. Obs. 5 and 6.

*Ver. 12. By their hand*] That is to say, by the hands of the Chaldeans.

*Ver. 16. The crown is fallen from our head*] At their feasts, at their marriages, and other seasons of festivity, they used to crown themselves with flowers. The prophet probably alludes to this custom, as we may gather from the preceding verses. The general meaning is, "All our glory is at an end, together with the advantages of

"being thy people, and enjoying thy presence, by which we were eminently distinguished from the rest of the world."

*Ver. 18. Because of the mountain of Zion*] Houbigant connects this with the preceding verse; *For these things our eyes are dim, for mount Zion, because it is desolate, and the foxes walk upon it.* See Judg. xv. 4.

*Ver. 21, 22. Renew our days, &c.*] *Renew our days as of old; ver. 22. After thou hast rejected us, and hast been very wroth against us.* Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet, in the name of his afflicted people, presents their miserable case before the God of all mercy, intreating him to regard, consider, and remove the reproach under which they groan. And no tear, no sigh of the truly sincere passes unnoticed.

1. He lays their present wretched state before God in a variety of particulars, wherein their grievous reproach appeared. Deprived of the inheritance of their fathers, strangers have seized their estates, and dwell in the houses which they had built. In a natural, political, and spiritual sense, they were become orphans and widows; the men slain with the sword, their king removed, and God himself had forsaken them. In their captivity they were not only destitute of the comforts of life, but the very necessities were hardly to be procured by them; even their water and their wood were to be purchased at an exorbitant rate. Groaning under heavy loads, scarcely would their heathen masters allow them sleep, and probably forbade them the observance of their sabbaths, wearing them out with incessant toil. For a morsel of bread to relieve their hunger, they yielded their necks to bondage in Egypt and Assyria; and the meanest among the nations whither they were dispersed, tyrannized over them. To a state of such ignominy and wretched servitude were they reduced; and not a friend to interpose to mitigate their burdens, or deliver them from their bondage: or their heathen masters suffered

suffered their very servants to insult them without check or rebuke. During the siege, when, driven by hunger, any ventured to go without the walls in quest of provision, *the sword of the wilderness, or of the plain*, the Chaldeans, who guarded every avenue, exposed them to constant peril of their lives: scorched up with famine, their shrivelled skins looked black, as if burnt with fire. Sacrificed to brutal lust, their wives and virgins fell a prey to lawless ravishers. Their princes were hanged by their cruel conquerors, and perhaps, when dead, their bodies *hanged up by their hand* and exposed. The elders in age or office were insulted, and no respect paid to dignity or hoary locks. The young men are set *to grind or carry the grist*, as if they were beasts of burden; and the very children sink under their loads of wood, unable to sustain them. The courts of justice are no more; the judges slain, or captives: the voice of music silenced; their joy is fled, and all their gaiety exchanged for mourning. The crown is fallen, their king a prisoner, their kingdom enslaved. *Note*; This world is a scene of awful changes: we must look to a better for never-fading crowns and uninterrupted joy.

2. Their sins have provoked these judgments: they own and lament it. *Our fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have borne their iniquities*, having added their own provocations to the past, till they had filled up the measure of their sins, *woe unto us*, our case is deplorable and pitiable, *that we have sinned*; and, having nothing to plead in vindication of themselves, they cast their souls upon the free grace and mercy of God, acknowledging the justice of all that they suffered; *for this our heart is faint*, both for their miseries and their sins; *for these things our eyes are dim with weeping, because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate*, the city and temple in ruins; *the foxes walk upon it*, without interruption as in the desert. *Note*; (1.) Among the bitterest griefs that affect the hearts of the pious, are the desolations of Zion, the afflictions of God's church and people. (2.) Sin is the root of all our sor-

rows, and more to be lamented than all the sufferings which it occasions.

2dly, The people of God, for whom the prophet speaks,

1. Express their dependance upon God. *Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever*, the same unchangeable Jehovah, faithful to all his promises; and therefore his believing people may comfort themselves in him, to whatever troubles they are exposed: *thy throne from generation to generation*; his dominion is eternal; and he who rules over all will over-rule every event for the good of them that love him. While Zion's God reigns, his saints need never despair.

2. They expostulate with God on their unhappy case. *Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time?* It had been long, and they were ready to fear that it would be for ever; yea, every moment of his displeasure seemed an age to them; and their unbelief was ready often to suggest, *but thou hast utterly rejected us*, and there is no more hope; *thou art very wroth against us*, to consume us. Or the words may be read, *For hast thou utterly rejected us? wilt thou be very wroth against us?* Humble expostulations are allowable: we may reason with God concerning his judgments, though we may not quarrel with him on account of them.

3. They pray. *Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned*. Conscious of their sad departures from him, and their utter inability to help themselves, they look to him who alone can work the mighty change. *Renew our days as of old*: bring us to our former state of happiness, and enable us to imitate the examples of our pious ancestors. This verse is repeated at last, after the following one, by the Jewish rabbins, who would not have the book conclude with the last melancholy words. *Note*; However dark the scene may close upon God's suffering saints on earth, let them patiently and perseveringly commend their souls to him, and then they shall quickly wake up in glory, honour, and immortality.

THE BOOK  
OF THE  
PROPHET EZEKIEL.

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*It is said, that this prophet was carried away a boy into captivity. He was the son of Buzi of the house of Aaron, and was consequently a priest as well as a prophet. He was carried away captive to Babylon with Jeconiah, and was one of those who settled near the river Chebar. He began his prophetic office in the fifth year after his captivity, and continued to prophesy about twenty years; from the year of the world 3409 to 3430. The principal design of his prophecies was to console his brethren of the captivity in Babylon, and to convince them that they were mistaken in imagining that such of their brethren as remained in Judæa, were in happier circumstances than themselves: and for this purpose he describes that terrible scene of calamities which God intended to bring upon Judæa; the final destruction of Jerusalem; the universal apostacy of the inhabitants; the plagues which were to be inflicted upon their enemies; the restoration of the Jews, and the coming of the Messiah. The liberty with which he treats the idolatry of his countrymen, is said to have so highly irritated the chief of them, as to have occasioned his being put to death; and in the time of Epiphanius, it was a current opinion, that his remains were deposited in the same sepulchre with those of Shem and Arphaxad, that his tomb was then to be seen, and that the Jews kept a lamp burning in it; who likewise pretended that they had this prophecy written by the prophet's own hand, which they read every year on the day of expiation. See Calmet's Preface to this book.*

*The originality of the writings which we have under the name of Ezekiel has never been doubted; and they have every possible mark of truth and authenticity. Ezekiel, says Bishop Lowth, is inferior to Jeremias in elegance, but is equal to Isaiah in sublimity, though in a different species of the sublime. He is bold, vehement, tragical, and deals very much in amplification: his sentiments are lofty, animated, poignant, and full of indignation. His images are fertile and magnificent. His diction is sounding, grave, austere, rough, and sometimes uncultivated. He abounds in repetitions, not for the sake of beauty or grace, but from vehemence and indignation. Whatever his subject be, he keeps it always in his eye, without the least deviation, and is so much taken up with it, that he has scarcely any regard to order or connection. In other things he may perhaps be exceeded by the other prophets; but in that species for which he was particularly turned, that is, in force, impetuosity, weight and grandeur, no writer ever equalled him. His diction is clear enough; almost all his obscurity arises from his subjects. His visions are particularly obscure; which however, as in Hosea, Amos, and Zechariah, are delivered in a plain and historical narration. The greater part of this book, but especially the middle of it, is poetical; whether we regard the matter or the language. But some passages are so rough and unpolished, that we are frequently at a loss to what species of writing we ought to refer them. As to style, continues the Bishop, you may with propriety enough place Isaiah, Jeremias, and Ezekiel in the same rank among the Hebrews, as Homer, Simonides, and Eschylus hold among the Greeks. See his 21st Prelection, and Michaelis's Notes, p. 110. The Jews did not permit any to read this prophet, at least the beginning of his book, till they were thirty years of age; and they have frequently made great objections to him from the obscurity of his prophecies; which appear rather to have arisen from their own ignorance, than from any other cause. See more concerning him in Calmet, and D'Herbelot's Bibliothéque Orientale, p. 942.*

## C H A P. I.

*The time of Ezekiel's prophesy at Chebar: his vision of four cherubims, of the four wheels, and of the glory of God.*

[Before Christ 595.]

**N**OW it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

2 In the fifth day of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the

land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

4 ¶ And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness *was* about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

5 Also out of the midst thereof *came* the likeness of four living creatures. And this *was* their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

## C H A P. I.

*Ver. 1. In the thirtieth year, &c.*] Archbishop Usher, Prideaux, Calmet, and others, are of opinion, that these thirty years are to be reckoned from the time when Josiah, and all the people of Judah, entered into that solemn covenant mentioned 2 Kings, xxiii. 3. which was in the 18th year of Josiah; from which time the same learned writers compute the *forty years* of Judah's transgression, mentioned ch. iv. 6. This *thirtieth year*, according to Usher, was in the 3410th year of the world, the 5th after the captivity of Jehoniah, and the 5th of the reign of Zedekiah. Ezekiel was then in captivity by Chebar, a river of Mesopotamia, where he saw *visions of God*; that is to say, prophetic visions. See ver. 3. Houbigant reads the verses thus: *It came to pass in the thirtieth year, ver. 2. which was the fifth year after the carrying away of king Jehoiachin, in the fourth month, in the fifth day, &c.*

*Ver. 4. And I looked, &c.*] God's anger and judgments are frequently compared to a *whirlwind*; and this whirlwind is represented as coming out of the *north*, to denote Nebuchadnezzar, who was to come from that quarter to destroy Jerusalem. Though Ezekiel was in Mesopotamia, God represented objects to him as if he had been in Judæa. As Nebuchadnezzar was only the instrument of God's vengeance upon the Jews, God himself is here described as coming to take that vengeance. It is very evident from this whole description, that the appearance of God, as emblematically represented after the fall of man at the gate of paradise, Gen. iii. 24. and afterwards in the holy of holies, is here described by the prophet. The second divine Person, the Jehovah of the Jews, is particularly spoken of in the 26th and following verses, as seated upon this throne of the cherubim, this seat of glory, which is spoken of as in motion and activity, from the peculiar circumstances of those providential judgments which the Almighty was now about to take upon the ungrateful people among whom he had condescended to fix this throne of his glory. The reader will find in the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation the same grand scene opened by St. John, as introductory to those prophetic denunciations which he is about to make in that book. In the interpretation of Scripture, it is always of the first im-

portance to consider the connection and coherence of the parts: Ezekiel tells us, that he saw *visions of God*; plain and prophetic revelations of the divine will; and, in the introduction to these revelations, he gives us a striking description of the Divinity in glory, and as preparing to execute his judgments, taken from the temple, whence only, as a priest and a prophet, he could properly derive his ideas. And as it is on all hands allowed, that the holy of holies was a type of the true heavens, (see Heb. ix. 24.) and as from all the representations of Scripture we are assured, that the divine throne in those true heavens is surrounded by adoring *angels*, there seems the utmost reason to conclude that the cherubim, or living creatures, spoken of here, in the Revelation, and in other parts of Scripture, are representative of the *angels*; an opinion which I have mentioned before in the note on Exod. xxv. 18. I am very well aware with what severity this opinion will be treated by some, and at the same time I have candour enough to confess, that there are many and great difficulties in it. But I find still greater in every other; and, from the most mature and impartial consideration, do sincerely believe, that this interpretation is most agreeable to the tenor of Scripture. The cherubim represented by a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle, have been thought by some to be the symbols of strength, address, prudence, and irresistible wisdom, which is excluded from no place, and is superior to all difficulties; and in this view the whole vision is considered as a strong representation of the majesty and power of God, under the appearance of a warrior in a triumphal chariot; which coincides, in a great measure, with what I have advanced above; namely, that this vision represents God in glory, attended by his great ones, those *angels* who excel in wisdom and strength, coming with a mighty prince from the north, to take vengeance on that people, and that temple where, under this emblematical representation, he had been pleased to make his residence in the holy of holies.

*Ver. 6. Every one had four wings*] In the most ancient hieroglyphic writings, a supreme governor was designed by a man with four wings, and his lieutenants or princes by a man with two: and their being out-stretched signified action or design. So the other particulars of the straightness



7 And their feet *were* straight feet ; and the sole of their feet *was* like the sole of a calf's foot : and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

8 And *they had* the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides ; and they four had their faces and their wings.

9 Their wings *were* joined one to another ; they turned not when they went ; they went every one straight forward.

10 As for the likenesses of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right side : and they four had the face of an ox on the left side ; they four also had the face of an eagle.

11 Thus *were* their faces : and their wings *were* stretched upward ; two *wings* of every one *were* joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

12 And they went every one straight for-

ward : whither the spirit was to go, they went ; *and* they turned not when they went.

13 As for the likenesses of the living creatures, their appearance *was* like burning coals of fire, *and* like the appearance of lamps : it went up and down among the living creatures ; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

15 ¶ Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.

16 The appearance of the wheels and their work *was* like unto the colour of a beryl : and they four had one likeness : and their appearance and their work *was* as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

17 When they went, they went upon their four sides : *and* they returned not when they went.

straightness of their feet, the brightness of their colour, their going forward, ver. 12. their being actuated by the Spirit, and the like, seem hieroglyphically to denote the several qualifications necessary in the divine ministers and executors of the Almighty's commands.

Ver. 9. — *Joined one to another*] Of the two in front, and of the two behind, the right wing of one reached to the left wing of the other ; the extremities of the expanded inner wings forming an arch.

*They turned not*] This circumstance is repeated ver. 12. 17. ch. x. 11. : and is explained by its opposite, " they went every one straight forward." The wheels and horses of chariots bend, and make a circuit, in turning : but this divine machine, actuated by one spirit, moved uniformly together ; the same line being always preserved between the corresponding cherubs and wheels, the sides of the rectangle limiting the whole, being always parallel, and the same faces of each cherub always looking onward in the same direction with the face of the charioteer.

This proceeding directly on, in the same undeviating inflexible position, seems to shew their steadiness in performing the divine will, which advances to its destined goal right onwards.

Ver. 10. *They four—and they four*] Milton had a right notion of this hieroglyphic, when he says of the cherubic shapes, " Four faces each had wondrous ;" and afterwards calls them " The fourfold-visaged four." Par. Lost. vi. 753. 845.

Ver. 11. *And their wings were stretched upward*] *And the wings of every one were parted above* (in the act of flying) : *two wings of every one were joined, and two covered their bodies.*

Ver. 12. *Whither the spirit was to go, they went*] *Whither the wind or tempest bore them, they were borne* : that great whirlwind spoken of in the fourth verse, which bore this magnificent chariot of the Lord.

Ver. 13. *Like the appearance, &c.*] *Like the appearance of lamps which went up and down among the living creatures.* That is, the fire moved itself up and down. Milton's expression is, " And careering fires between : " that is, fires which ran swiftly, and as it were tilted at each other. See Par. Lost, vi. 756. and Newton's note.

Ver. 15—21. *Behold one wheel upon the earth*] The prophet now proceeds to describe the wheels of this chariot borne by the living creatures. " Now, as I contemplated these living creatures (says he) *there appeared upon the ground a wheel, near each of them by their four faces ; each living creature had his wheel near him : their appearance and their work were as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel,*" ver. 16. like two circles in a sphere, cutting each other at right angles ; to signify, says a commentator, the stability and uniformity of their motion, and the subserviency of one part of providence to another, ver. 17. *When they went, they went by the sides of these four living creatures, nor in going did they change their situation,* each wheel still continuing in its proper place by the side of the living creature. Houbigant renders the 18th verse, *Their spokes were at equal distances ; and when I beheld them, their felles were full of eyes round about in them four.* These wheels went whither the living creatures went, carried by the same powerful wind which bore the living creatures along. See ver. 12. In reading this passage we should remember that the prophets commonly speak in a very lofty and figurative style ; and there is nothing more agreeable to sublime and poetic description, than what we here read in our prophet, concerning the chariot of the Almighty, borne on the wings of the wind, to execute his commands. See Pf. xviii. 8—10.

Ver. 16. *Beryl—wheel in the middle of a wheel*] *Chrysolite—wheel put cross within another wheel.*

Ver. 17. *Returned not*] *Turned not.*

18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful: and their rings *were* full of eyes round about them four.

19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

20 Whithersoever the spirit *was* to go, they went, thither *was their* spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels.

21 When those went, *these* went; and when those stood, *these* stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels.

22 And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature *was* as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

23 And under the firmament *were* their wings straight, the one toward the other:

every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.

24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

25 And there was a voice from the firmament that *was* over their heads, when they stood, *and* had let down their wings.

26 ¶ And above the firmament that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne *was* the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it *had* brightness round about.

28 As the appearance of the bow that is

*Ver. 18. Rings—rings] Strakes.*

*Ver. 19. By them] Beside them; and so in ver. 20, 21. instead of over-against them.*

*Ver. 22. The likeness of the firmament, &c.] Over the heads of the living creatures was the likeness of a clear sky or firmament, where the Son of Man appears in divine glory, as upon a throne: see ver. 26. By terrible crystal is meant such as dazzles the eyes with its lustre. It may be rendered, the brightest—the clearest. It is compared to a sapphire stone; chap. x. 1.*

*Ver. 23. Their wings straight, &c.] Their wings stretched out, &c. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 24. And when they went, &c.] To denote the terribleness of the judgments which they were to execute upon Jerusalem and the whole Jewish nation. See chap. xliii. 2. where the prophet foretels the return of the God of Israel in such a manner, as strongly confirms the interpretation that we have given of this chapter. Houbigant connects the latter part of this verse with that following; When they stood they let down their wings; but then a sound arose from the firmament, &c.*

*Ver. 26. And upon the likeness of the throne] After having particularly described the chariot and throne of the Almighty, the prophet proceeds to speak of him who sat upon the throne, who was undoubtedly no other than the Son of God, as he was represented in the holy of holies, prefiguring his gracious incarnation. The rainbow, a grand symbol of the covenant of grace, both here and in Rev. iv. 3. is described as about the throne. And it plainly appears from the subsequent chapters, that this divine Person, who became man for our salvation, was the*

Lord God, the sovereign, the Jehovah of the Jews. See the next chapter, ver. 3, 4.

*Ver. 28. This was the appearance] Houbigant observes upon this vision in general; First, That it seems most probably to adumbrate the state of the Jews, who were soon to be subdued by Nebuchadrezzar and carried into captivity; and that book mentioned in the next chapter, ver. 9. wherein Lamentations were written, discovers this to have been the subject of the vision. Secondly, That the vision was such as to be easily intelligible by the Jews of those times who read it with attention. Thirdly, That nearly the same things are shadowed forth, as in the vision of Isaiah, chap. vi. for this vision of Ezekiel is called *The glory of the Lord*, as the evangelist denominates Isaiah's vision; saying, *These things, said Isaiah, when he saw his glory.* Each prophet saw as the appearance of a man, or the Son of Man, sitting on a throne, which throne the angels support, who, moved by his Spirit, sometimes stand still, sometimes walk, and are borne wherever the Spirit carrieth them; whereby is signified that nothing is done without the appointment or permission of that Mediator whom the Jews expected: that though their state should be subverted by the Chaldeans, yet all the kingdoms of the earth were under the dominion of the same Mediator, whom Ezekiel adores; that all the promises of God should and could be performed by him, since he, though appearing to forsake his people, and in reality forsaking the impatient, yet commands both angels and men, and performs his purposes by them as his ministers. Thus far Houbigant; and we may in conclusion observe, that it would be the greatest absurdity, in this view of the vision,*

in the cloud in the day of rain, so *was* the appearance of the brightness round about. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of

the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

which appears just, and perfectly consistent with the scheme of the prophet, to suppose that the cherubic figures can represent the Deity; because the prophet, proceeding regularly in his description of this chariot and throne of the divine glory, speaks with the utmost propriety, having described the throne with all its appendages of the Divinity seated upon it in the 26th verse: whereas, understanding the cherubic figures of the Divinity, we should have two representations of him, and the whole would certainly be irregular and out of order.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The date of this prophecy. *In the thirtieth year*, as some suppose, of the prophet's life, when, according to custom, he entered on his priestly office; but others refer it to the æra commencing from Nabopolassar's reign, which was the twelfth of the captivity, reckoning from the third year of Jehoiakim; and the fifth of Jeboiachin's, or Coniah's, captivity, in the fourth month, the fifth day of the month, probably a sabbath-day, when the prophet was employed in the blessed work of contemplation and prayer; for seven days after we find another vision of the same nature given him, chap. iii. 16. *Note*; They who seek to improve the sacred hours that God hath separated for his own service, in waiting upon him, will find him often manifesting himself to them as he doth not unto the world.

2. The place: *among the captives by the river of Chebar, in the land of the Chaldeans*. In their afflicted state God thus shewed that he had not forsaken them, but would still encourage their hope of mercy, and engage them to repent and turn to him. The prophet shared in the common calamity; for in national judgments good and bad fall frequently together: but God knows how to comfort the hearts of his people with inward supports which others partake not of; and usually his suffering saints have found in the day of their troubles more abundant consolations, 2 Cor. i. 5.

3. The vision. *The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God*: some amazing displays of the divine glory appeared. And the word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi. The words *היה היה* *haiah baiah*, rendered *came expressly* are very emphatical in the original, implying the certainty, evidence, and clearness, of the prophetic word which God revealed to him. *And the hand of the Lord was there upon him*, supporting him, that he might not be overpowered with the dazzling lustre; and strengthening him to go forth to deliver what was communicated to him. *Note*; (1.) They will be enabled to deliver their message with greatest boldness, who speak from the most assured conviction in their own souls. (2.) If God sends us forth in his ministry, we may expect his hand will be with us to strengthen us, and give demonstration and power to the word that he puts into our mouths.

2dly, The introduction to these visions of God is very

awful, tending to affect the prophet's mind with the highest reverence of that Jehovah whose minister he was, and to encourage the poor captives, whose glory seemed now departed from them: but lo! their God is still in the midst of them.

1. *Behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, the vehicle of this awful vision, and a fire infolding itself, a cheering fire to God's believing people, a consuming fire to his foes; and a brightness was about it, the cloud was illuminated by the fire, an emblem of that irradiation which darted into the prophet's mind; and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.* *הושביל* *Chashmal*, translated *amber*, some render a *lively colour*: others, a *coal exceedingly fired*: others suppose that Christ is meant, who is represented something similar hereunto, Rev. i. 15. iv. 3. and hereunto I incline. He it was who appeared to Moses in the bush, to Isaiah on his throne, and here to Ezekiel in the midst of the fire.

2. *The likeness of four living creatures came out of the midst of this vision, not real creatures, but emblematical representations, either of the angels who surround the throne of God; or of Gospel ministers\**, see Rev. iv. 6—9. where the same emblematic figures appear. They are *living creatures*, themselves quickened to spiritual life, lively in their ministrations, and the means of quickening the souls of others; *four*, as sent forth to the four quarters of the earth, to preach the Gospel to every creature; in *the likeness of a man*, except in the following particulars.

[1.] *They had four faces*. (1.) *The face of a man*, being taken from among men to minister in the things of God, with understanding to instruct the ignorant, and with the feelings of humanity to have compassion on the afflicted. (2.) *Of a lion*, to denote their courage and boldness in preaching the Gospel amidst all opposition. (3.) *Of an ox*, to represent their indefatigable labour and patience. (4.) *Of an eagle*, signifying their piercing sight, and clear knowledge of the mysteries of God, and their soaring high in divine contemplation and holy affections.

[2.] *Every one had also four wings*. From ver. 11—23. they seem to have had two more, as the seraphim in Isaiah, and the beasts in the Revelations; four covered their bodies, and two were stretched upward, and these wings joined one to another, intimating, (1.) The swiftness and diligence that they use in executing God's will, and the work of their ministry. (2.) The concord and union which subsist among them, united in love and fellow-labourers in the same Gospel. (3.) The consciousness of their own infirmities, which makes them ashamed of their imperfect services, and count themselves unworthy to appear before God.

[3.] *Their feet were straight feet*. They walk uprightly before God; never turn aside to the crooked paths of error and immorality; they perseveringly go forward, undismayed by opposition, persecution, or temptation, and

\* When the Critical Notes and the Reflections are duly compared, the reader will have the sentiments of the wisest and of the most spiritual divines on this subject. But I prefer the sense which I have given in the annotations.

## C H A P. II.

*Ezekiel's commission: his instruction. The roll of his heavy prophesy.*

[Before Christ 595.]

**A**ND he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.

with a single eye to God's glory; *the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot*, one of the clean animals which divide the hoof; and intimates the purity of their conversation, or the firmness of their hearts in their ministry; *and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass*, so beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that bring glad tidings of peace, and so bright the lustre of their holy examples.

[4.] *They had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides*, implying activity in executing what their wisdom and prudence directed; and many hands, because their work is vast and large, yet *under their wings*, not making ostentation of their labours, but ascribing the glory to him from whom all their strength is derived.

[5.] They were under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. *Whither the Spirit was to go, they went*: by him alone they are called to take the ministry upon them, *inwardly moved* by his powerful grace; by him they are supported in their labour, led into all truth, and readily disposed for every service which he is pleased to appoint them, not staggering at the difficulties; nor can they be *turned back*, by any fear of man, from delivering the message with which he hath sent them: like *coals of fire* they burn with divine zeal, and as *lamps* they shine bright themselves in the exercise of every divine grace; and hold forth the word of light to others, clear, distinct, enlightening, cheering, warming their souls. *It went up and down among the living creatures*; the divine light and fire of zeal filled them; *bright*, shining on every side, and darting like *lightning* to the ends of the earth; so extensive, so powerful, so penetrating was the Gospel word that they preached: and, when they had executed their ministry with this fervour and activity, they returned to give an account to their Master, and to receive fresh orders from him, desiring to approve themselves to him in all things, and take no step but under his guidance and by his direction. Let Gospel ministers, looking on these cherubim, prove their own selves, and learn what they should be.

3dly, The vision of the wheels follows that of the living creatures, which are variously interpreted. Some suppose them an emblem of the dispensations of Providence, others of the word of God and the ministrations of it, and others of the Gospel churches. But *one wheel* is mentioned, ver. 15. for the church is one body, composed of innumerable believers; though it appears that they were *four*, ver. 16. and chap. x. 9. being collected from the four quarters of the world. The *wheel* may be considered as an emblem of perfection; or it may represent the moveable state of the churches, or the different circumstances of prosperity and adversity to which they are alternately subject; or as composing a chariot with the cherubim, 1 Chron. xxviii. 18. in which the Lord Jesus rides in ma-

2 And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, *even* unto this very day.

jefty and glory, Cant. iii. 9. *The wheels are by the living creatures*; intimating, that the several congregations of true believers follow their ministers, who preside in their worship, stir up their souls to run the way of God's commandments, and direct and lead them aright: *With his four faces*, each wheel having four faces, one on each of the semicircles which composed it, being *a wheel in the middle of a wheel*, not a smaller wheel in a larger, but two circles crossing each other at right angles, and forming one wheel or orb, as it is represented, chap. x. 13. and these faces are the same with those of the cherubim, signifying that there is the most exact resemblance between faithful pastors and their people. they having the like constancy in the profession which they make, labouring in their sphere with equal diligence for God, and patiently bearing the same sufferings for the Gospel's sake; endued, as spiritual men, with an enlightened understanding and knowledge of the mysteries of godliness, and tenderly compassionate to their brethren; bold as lions in the cause of God and truth, and soaring aloft as eagles above these sublunary things, having their affections fixed, not on things on earth, but things in heaven. *Their appearance and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl*, so excellent and precious to the Lord are his saints, they are his jewels; and *they four had one likeness*, all true believers bearing the image of the same Lord; and perfectly resembling each other in their spirit and temper, they are all one in Christ Jesus; *when they went, they went upon their four sides, and they returned not when they went*, being from their construction ready to turn to the four points, without wheeling about. The faithful saints of God thus go still right on, advancing towards their eternal home. *Their rings were high*; for the church is visible, and lifted up in might and honour above all the powers of earth and hell: *dreadful*; the enemies of God's people shall be made to tremble before them; or *they had fear*, a reverential fear of God, shewn in his worship; and carefulness never to offend him; and they *were full of eyes*, clear-sighted in the knowledge of Gospel truth, watchful over their own hearts, and jealous over each other. *When the living creatures went, the wheels went by them*, true believers joining with their ministers in the same worship, and followers of their good conversation in Christ; and *when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up*; for the lively frame of the minister's own soul, breathing in his discourses, has the most immediate tendency to raise up the souls of his hearers to high and heavenly things. *Whithersoever the Spirit was to go they went*; under the guidance of God's Spirit they were led; and as he taught and directed, *thither was their spirit to go*; and the wheels were lifted up over against them, close to the sides of the living creatures; for the spirit of the living creature

4 For *they are* impudent children and stiff-hearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD.

5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they *are* a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

6 ¶ And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns *be* with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not

afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house.

7 And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear: for they *are* most rebellious.

8 But thou son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.

9 ¶ And when I looked, behold, an hand *was* sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book *was* therein;

*creature was in the wheels; the same spirit actuating both ministers and people, giving them life and motion: and inseparably united, as animated by one soul, they went, or rested together. So intimate is the fellowship between a minister and his people; when he is active, they will be lively; if he be indolent, they will be ready to be infected thereby. Upon the heads of the living creature was the likeness of the firmament, as the colour of the terrible crystal, bright, dazzling, and transparent; for though the throne of Christ is above the firmament, he sees all things done on earth; his eyes look down upon his church and people, and they by faith are enabled through the Gospel glass to look up to him, and behold his glory. Under the firmament were their wings straight stretched upward, and touching each other, with two others covering each of their sides, and when they went, preaching the Gospel, I heard the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters; so loud and extensive was the sound of their voice bearing the glad tidings of salvation to the distant Gentile lands, as the voice of the Almighty, awful, majestic, powerful: the voice of speech; for though the word is God's, the messengers are men, as the wife of an heathen, multitudes being employed in this ministry, and all uniting in one cry, warning every man, and teaching every man, that they may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: and when they stood, they let down their wings, having finished the work on which they were sent, and waiting for fresh instructions, which they receive from Christ their Lord and Master, who speaks from the firmament over their heads; in his word, and by the secret influences of his Spirit, directing them whither to go, and what to speak; encouraging them to persist in their work on earth, or calling their faithful souls to his rest in heaven.*

4thly, The most glorious part of the vision is yet to come. The living creatures were but the servants to prepare the way; here the Lord of life appears seated on his royal throne. Above the firmament was the likeness of a throne; the symbol of that universal dominion and eternal kingdom which, as God over all, the Lord Jesus essentially possesses; or which, as Mediator, he has received: as the appearance of a sapphire-stone, very glorious; and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it; even that divine Lord, who in the fulness of time condescended to appear in fashion as a man, and in this human form, before his incarnation, manifested

himself to many of his saints. He appeared as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it; a fire of love to his people, a fire of wrath to his enemies: and this fire which appeared all over him had a brightness round about like the rainbow, similar to which he is represented, Rev. x. 1. an emblem of the covenant of grace, in which Christ is the great author, purchaser, and bestower of every blessing. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord; of him who was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily: and when I saw it, I fell upon my face, in humble adoration of this divine Personage, and filled with reverence and godly fear: and I heard a voice of one that spake, with an articulate human voice, delivering to him the commission contained in the following chapter.

## CHAP. II.

Ver. 1. He said unto me] That is, the Divine Person or Son of God, whom the prophet had seen in glory in the preceding vision. Son of man is here understood to signify the same with a common and ordinary man. See Psal. viii. 4. And accordingly most commentators understand it as applied to the prophet, to remind him of his frailty and mortality, and of the infinite distance between God and man. See Calmet.

Ver. 2. And the Spirit entered into me, &c.] That is, say some, the same Spirit which influenced and animated the living creatures. Calmet interprets it, the prophetic spirit; which, from ch. iii. 24. seems the most probable.

Ver. 4. Impudent children and stiff-hearted] Children impudent of face and hardened in heart.

Ver. 6. And thou—be not afraid of them] The prophets and messengers of God are often exhorted to take courage, and are promised a proportionable assistance in discharge of their office, without fearing any man's person, or standing in awe of any man's greatness. The expressions in this verse perfectly characterize a wicked people, who, having shaken off all restraint of religion and laws, will hear no reason, nor attend to the remonstrances of those who would instruct them in better sentiments.

Ver. 8. Open thy mouth, &c.] The knowledge of divine truth is often expressed by the metaphors of bodily food and nourishment; and therefore, to eat the words of this prophecy, signifies to commit them to memory, and to meditate

10 And he spread it before me: and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

### C H A P. III.

*Ezekiel eateth the roll. God encourageth him. God sheweth him the rule of prophesy. God shutteth and openeth the prophet's mouth.*

[Before Christ 595.]

**M**OREOVER he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.

2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

4 ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.

5 For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel;

meditate upon and digest them. See the 10th verse of the next chapter.

*Ver. 10. And there was written therein lamentations, &c.]* That is, all the prophecies contained in this book consisted of God's judgments, and of the mournful events which he was about to bring upon Israel. See what was observed on the last note of the preceding chapter.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, The Divine Person who appeared in the foregoing chapter addresses the prophet by this title, *Son of man*, which may be considered as an humbling notice, lest he should be puffed up by the visions with which he was favoured, and the high commission bestowed on him; or rather as an honourable distinction, being the name which the Son of God himself would bear in his incarnation, of whom the prophet is appointed to be the type and figure.

1. He is commanded to arise and hear. *Stand upon thy feet*, from his lowly prostration, and *I will speak unto thee*, which implied favour and encouragement; and all who humble their souls before God, may be assured that they shall hear him speak to them in mercy. And with this command there went forth power; *the Spirit entered into me*, God's Spirit strengthening him to stand up on his feet, and qualifying him with gifts and graces for the discharge of his high office. Thus all our strength must come from Christ; he alone can enable us for that which he commands; and they who are sent by him, while they minister in his strength, shall find his Spirit with them to the end of the world.

2. His commission is given him. *I send thee to the children of Israel*, though they had long since justly forfeited all title to his regard; *to a rebellious nation*, or *rebellious Gentiles*, for such they resembled in their idolatries: hereditary transgressors, their fathers began their rebellion, and they had persisted in it to that day, by habit in sin become *impudent* and shameless, *stiff-hearted* and stubborn, who would not hear nor submit to rebuke: to them he is sent, to speak in God's name, and by his authority; and they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house) yet shall know that there has been a prophet among them. If they heard and repented, they would acknowledge and adore the goodness of God in sending them a prophet: if they rejected him, they should prove

the truth of his mission by the accomplishment of the judgments upon them, which he pronounced. *Note:* (1.) God's patience is wonderful, not willing that the most rebellious sinners should perish. (2.) They who persist in their iniquities, notwithstanding all the methods of providence and grace that God has used to recover them, will be left without excuse. (3.) None can speak with authority, who have not a divine commission. (4.) Whether sinners will hear or forbear, God will be glorified, and his faithful ministers be honoured and approved by him.

2dly, Ezekiel was now appointed to his arduous office; and great courage it required to execute it with fidelity. Therefore,

1. God charges him to be faithful, notwithstanding all the opposition that he might expect. His abode was among *briers and scorpions*, wicked men, persecutors, subtle, malignant, venomous, whose words would be bitter, and their looks malicious, frowning, fierce: but he must not fear nor be dismayed at their threatenings, frowns, or ill usage; nor like them prove rebellious, and turn away from God, but attentively hear, seriously digest, and boldly declare the message which God would put into his mouth. *Note:* (1.) God's faithful ministers may ever expect to meet with unreasonable and wicked men; but they must not fear their faces, nor be intimidated to keep back any thing of the whole counsel of God, how much soever they may be exposed thereby. (2.) Though those to whom we are sent are never so rebellious and perverse, we are bound at least to deliver our own souls by continuing to testify against them. (3.) They who are sent of God must carefully adhere to their instructions, and speak his word without adulteration; not conniving at men's sins, or, through fear of offending, softening the sharp rebuke; lest by such unfaithfulness they become partakers of their guilt and ruin.

2. The roll, containing his message, is spread before him. *When I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me, and lo, a roll of a book was therein*; the hand of Christ who gave him his orders, and will support him in the discharge of his office: and he spread it before me, that he might peruse the contents, and through divine illumination understand them: and it was written within and without, on both sides of the parchment or vellum, denoting the multitude of matter that it contained; and this too the most afflictive, for

6 Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee.

7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel *are* impudent and hardhearted.

8 Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.

9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house.

10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears.

11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

12 Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, *saying*, Blessed *be* the glory of the LORD from his place.

13 *I heard* also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another,

and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing.

14 So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

15 ¶ Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, *saying*,

17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

20 Again, When a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he

for there ~~were~~ written therein, lamentations, and mourning, and *woe*, both with regard to the present wretched state of the Jews, so greatly to be bemoaned, and full of terrible threatenings of greater wrath and judgments ready to fall upon them for their impenitence. *Note*: (1.) They who bear God's message must carefully peruse their Bibles, that they may be sure to speak as the oracles of God. (2.) Impenitent sinners can expect to hear from God no word of comfort, but wrath to the uttermost.

CHAP. III.

*Ver. 1. Eat that thou findest] Eat that which is reached out to thee.* Houbigant. The Chaldee, instead of *eat*, reads *receive*, as it is explained in the 10th verse, *receive in thine heart*.

*Ver. 3. Cause thy belly to eat] Thy belly shall eat this roll which I give thee; and thy bowels shall be filled with it: And while I did eat it, it was sweet in my mouth like honey.* Houbigant. See Rev. x. 10. where St. John, eating the roll, found it *sweet* at first, but afterwards *bitter*; that is to say, observes Bishop Newton, "The knowledge of future

"things at first was pleasant; but the sad contents of the *little book* afterwards filled his soul with sorrow."

*Ver. 12. Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place]* Whatever place God honours with his especial presence is equivalent to his temple; and there the angels always attend upon the Divine Majesty to give him the honour due unto his name. Instead of, *From his place*, we may read, *In his place*.

*Ver. 14. I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit]* I went with a bitter and uneasy mind. See the note on ver. 3.

*Ver. 15. Tel-abib]* Tel-abib is generally supposed to be a town in Mesopotamia near the river Chebar. The remainder of the verse is to be understood in the same manner as Job, ii. 13.

*Ver. 17. I have made thee a watchman]* See Isai. li. 7, 8. lvi. 10.

*Ver. 20. And I lay a stumbling-block before him]* And if when I bring ruin upon him, he shall die because thou hast not given him warning; he shall die, &c. Houbigant. The word מִכְשׁוֹל *mikshol*, rendered *ruin*, signifies those diseases or afflictions wherewith God punished the idolatrous Jews among the Chaldeans. See Houbigant's note.



shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered, but his blood will I require at thine hand.

21 Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

22 ¶ And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee.

23 Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the LORD

stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face.

24 Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house.

25 But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them:

26 And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house.

27 But when I speak with thee, I will open

*Ver. 25. They shall put bands] Bands shall be put upon thee, and thou shalt be bound therewith. Houbigant reads the latter clause, That thou canst not move thyself among them. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 27. He that heareth, let him hear, &c.] See ver. 11. and ch. ii. 5. "Hear who will, and he who will not, let him forbear." These are the strongest marks of the indignation of the Lord; "The hardness of Israel is such, that they do not deserve to be spoken to again. Say to them for the last time, If they will hear, let them hear; if not, I give them up."*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This is a continuation of the vision of the foregoing chapter.

1. The prophet eats the roll at the divine command; not literally a real roll, but figuratively, or in vision: he must read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the prophetic word sent him, filling his head with the knowledge, and his heart with the love of it; and, not disobedient to the heavenly vision, he opened his mouth, and the Lord caused him to eat the roll; gave him understanding of his message, and inclination and ability to discharge his office; and he found it in his mouth as honey for sweetness: whatever mourning and woe it contained to the impenitent, there were great and precious promises therein respecting Christ and his salvation, on which his soul fed with great delight. *Note;* (1.) God's word is the bread of life, every day to be fed upon by all his people, deeply to be received into the heart, and universally to be embraced and obeyed. (2.) They who minister to others in holy things, are especially bound to meditate on their subject, and make solemn and serious preparation before they presume to speak God's word. (3.) All our sufficiency is of God: though we had the greatest human ability, and the most intense application, unless he cause us to eat the roll, and bestow a spirit of wisdom and understanding, we shall know nothing as we ought to know. (4.) They who make God's word their daily meditation, will find it sweeter than honey or the honey-comb.

2. He is sent as before to the rebellious house of Israel. When he had thoroughly learnt and digested the roll, he

must go and faithfully deliver it, careful to speak God's words; not his own, or the enticing words of man's wisdom, but those which the Holy Ghost teacheth; for thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech, but to the house of Israel, for whom he ought to have a tender concern, and from whom he might expect, as he spoke to them in their own tongue, and with the most convincing arguments, attention and obedience. Or this is mentioned to upbraid their impenitence and obstinacy in rejecting him; for had he been sent to the most barbarous nations, whose language he could not understand, and must have spoken by an interpreter; yet would his preaching have been more effectual to them than it will now be to his own countrymen, whose hardened hearts would be deaf to the plainest admonitions, and inattentive to the most awful warnings: nor need the prophet wonder if they refused to hearken to him, when they had rejected God himself. Nevertheless he must go; and God engages to endue him with such invincible courage and unshaken intrepidity, that he shall be able to face, yea, to confound the boldest, most impudent, and daring sinners among them; and therefore, whatever dangers threatened, he need not fear or be dismayed, but go and utter all God's words; receiving them into his own heart and ears, without exception or disputing against them, and delivering them without reserve in God's name, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. *Note;* (1.) They who have the word of God clearly set before them, and wilfully reject the counsel of God against their own souls, are without excuse. (2.) They who have impudent sinners to deal with, need a forehead of adamant, not to be abashed or disconcerted by their mockery or insults. (3.) When we are called out to hard services, we shall be furnished for our place and station; as our day is, our strength shall be. (4.) Though we should not see the happy fruit of our labours which we could wish, we must not be discouraged from persevering zeal in the discharge of our ministry.

3. The Spirit of God with a holy violence sets him on his work. He lifted me up, and took me away, as Philip, Acts, viii. 39. carrying him through the air from the place where he was, to another company of the captives seated at a distance

thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; he that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.

a distance on the same river Chebar; and I heard behind me, as he went, a voice of a great rushing, proceeding from the living creatures and the wheels, saying, *Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place*; which may be considered as an ascription of praise offered to God by all his saints, whether ministers or people, proceeding from his church militant out of his temple on earth, or from his church triumphant out of heaven, on account of his glorious perfections, and all his righteous works and ways. Or it may be a sigh of lamentation after the blessed glory of the Lord removing out of his place, forsaking his temple. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures, who clapped them when they praised God; that touched one another, or, literally, kissed a woman her sister, uniting in true love to God and one another, and joining in this doxology; and the noise of the wheels over against them, actuated by the same Spirit, and giving the same glory to God; and a noise of a great rushing, as before; and I went in bitterness, grieved at the people's wickedness, and affected with the doleful tidings that he carried; in the heat of my spirit, moved with indignation, or fretting at the disobedience foretold, and reluctant to go on to unwelcome an errand: but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me; constraining him to the work, and mightily supporting him to go through with it. Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, the Jews who were fixed there, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, another colony on the same river; and I sat where they sat, attentive to their discourse, or waiting the prophetic impulse; and remained there astonished among them seven days, as Job's friends, Job, ii. 13. overwhelmed with grief on beholding their misery, or overpowered with the weight of the awful message that he brought them. Note; (1.) If God did not use a kind of holy but loving constraint with our reluctant hearts, we should be ready at times to desert our ministerial post. (2.) There may be many struggles of fear and unbelief where grace in a measure reigns: and, though it is with trembling, yet such dare go at God's bidding. (3.) Nothing is more discouraging to a minister's spirit, than to see a hardened people unaffected under his discourses. (4.) Great griefs are often silent, too big for utterance, and far beyond tears.

2dly, After seven days God sends his word to him: probably this was a sabbath, and he will thus honour his day by especial manifestations of himself.

1. God tells him his office. *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel*; to watch over their souls, to warn and guard them against their spiritual enemies; for which purpose, sharp discernment, sleepless vigilance, and courageous fidelity, are needful. Note; They whom God appoints for watchmen on the walls of his Zion, the church, must shun no toil; desert their post for no danger; watch always; and pray for a better guard than their own; conscious that without the divine benediction and care, the watchman waketh but in vain.

2. The duty of his office is set before him, the blessings of fidelity, and the curse of unfaithfulness. He must speak according to the divine word communicated to him. *Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me*; and

as the characters of men are different, he must distinguish between the precious and the vile, and give to each their due portion.

[1.] He must address the wicked, to warn him of his danger, and lead him to repentance. (1.) While he persists in his sins he is a damned soul, and eternal death is his portion. (2.) If he repent, and turn from his wickedness, he shall save his life, God being ready to pardon and receive every returning sinner. (3.) Though the minister be negligent, that will be no excuse; for the sinner shall perish in his iniquity. Yet, (4.) God will require at the watchman's hands the souls that are lost through his carelessness and unfaithfulness; and a terrible reckoning will this prove in a judgment-day for all unfaithful and negligent ministers. (5.) If they have been faithful, though unsuccessful, God will approve their conduct, and they shall at least deliver their own souls.

[2.] He must address the righteous; either those who are such professionally, or those who are so in sincerity and truth. (1.) Some are only externally righteous, delivered from grosser excesses, and observant of the forms of godliness merely. These easily turn from their righteousness, and commit iniquity: they have no inward principle to support them, and therefore in the time of temptation apostatize from the little profession that they have made. In the way of such God lays stumbling-blocks, (ver. 20.) to make manifest the secret wickedness which reigns within; that is to say, he delivers them up to themselves and the enemy of their souls. These will die eternally, and all their good deeds and duties, on which they trusted, will stand them in no stead; unless the Lord vouchsafe to them another call, and they repent. Of this he must assure them, at the peril of his own soul, chargeable with their blood if he neglect his office; not that his neglect will be their exculpation; they shall notwithstanding perish in their apostacy. (2.) Some are righteous in sincerity and truth, justified by Christ Jesus, and sanctified by his Spirit, yet these need warnings. These must be warned that they sin not; for the most holy need continually to watch and pray against sin; the effect of which will be, that he sin not, receiving and improving under the word of exhortation. Persevering in this way he shall surely live, and finally be saved, the path of holiness being the way to glory; the warning through divine grace being in this case effectual, and the fidelity of the minister approved: thus he shall save his own soul, and those who hear him, 1 Tim. iv. 6.

3dly, We have a repetition of the former glorious vision made to the prophet in the plain, whither at the divine command he had gone forth, vouchsafed to him probably to confirm his faith, and overcome the reluctance that he might feel to undertake the prophetic office.

1. He is commanded to go and shut himself up in his house, there to wait farther instructions from God; or, as withdrawing himself from a people unworthy of the divine notice; or, as others with probability suggest, as a figure of Jerusalem closely besieged by the Chaldeans, so that none might go forth. Note; (1.) It is a heavy judgment on a people, when God shuts up and removes from them

## C H A P. IV.

*Under the type of a siege, is shewed the time from the defection of Jeroboam to the captivity. By the provision of the siege is shewed the hardness of the famine.*

[Before Christ 594.]

**T**HOU also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, *even* Jerusalem :

2 And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it ; set the

camp also against it, and set *battering rams* against it round about.

3 Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city : and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This *shall be* a sign to the house of Israel.

4 ¶ Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon

their faithful reprovers. (2.) Ministers have need of retirement, to learn themselves of God what they must declare unto others. There is little prospect of profitable preaching, without previous meditation and prayer.

2. He is warned of the insults which they would put upon him. *They shall put bands upon thee*, either as a disturber of the peace, as a false prophet, or a mad enthusiast ; with all which characters the faithful and zealous ministers of God are often branded : or this may be understood figuratively, either of the obstinate disobedience of the people, which shut his mouth ; or of the divine order to retire, which tied up his hands from labouring among them. Therefore,

3. He must be silent, neither go among them, nor speak to them as a reprover ; but leave them to their hard and impenitent hearts, as a *rebellious house*, till God shall take off the interdict ; and, having communicated to the prophet all his mind concerning them, shall open his mouth, and authorize and enable him to speak, whether they will *hear* and be reformed, or *forbear* at the peril of their eternal ruin. God's mercy will thus be glorified in the salvation of the repentant sinner, or his justice in the damnation of the obstinately rebellious.

## C H A P. IV.

*Ver. 1. Take thee a tile*] *A slate.* See Jer. i. 11. xiii. 4. Maimonides, not attending to the primitive mode of information made use of by Ezekiel here, by Jeremiah in the passages referred to, and by several other of the prophets, is much scandalised at several of these actions, unbecoming, as he supposed, the dignity of the prophetic office : and is therefore for resolving them in general into supernatural visions, impressed on the imagination of the prophet ; and this because some few of them, perhaps, may admit of such an interpretation. His reasoning on this head is to the following effect : As the prophet thought that in a vision, ch. viii. 8, 9. he was commanded to dig in the wall, that he might enter and see what was doing within ; and that he did dig, and entered through a hole, and saw what was to be seen ; so likewise when he was commanded in the present passage to take a *tile*, and in ch. v. to take him a sharp razor, we should conclude that both these actions were merely supernatural visions ; it arguing an impeachment of the divine wisdom to employ his ministers in actions of so low a kind. But here, says Bishop Warburton, the author's reasoning is defective, because what Ezekiel saw, in the *chambers of imagery*, ch. viii. was in a

vision ; therefore, says Maimonides, his delineation of the plan of the siege, and his shaving his beard, chap. iv. and v. were likewise in vision. But to make this inference logical, it is necessary that the circumstances in the viiith, and those in the ivth and vth chapters, be shewn to be specifically the same. Examine them, and they are found to be very different. That in the viiith was to shew the prophet the excessive idolatry of Jerusalem, by a sight of the very idolatry itself. Those in the ivth and vth were to convey the will of God by the prophet to the people in a symbolic action. Now in the first place the information was properly in vision, and fully answered the purpose, namely, the prophet's information ; but in the latter a vision had been improper, for a vision to the prophet was of itself no information to the people. See the Divine Legation, vol. iii. and, for more on the subject of these prophetic actions, the note on chap. xii. 3.

*Ver. 3. Take thou unto thee an iron pan*] The prophet takes to him an iron pot or vessel, such as fire was wont to be carried in before the Chaldean and Persian generals, when they went to battle. And he *puts it for a wall of iron between him and the city*, to signify the force and strength of that army whose symbol was fire. Then he *sets, or hardens his face against the city*, as men look fiercely, who are inflexibly bent on the ruin of another ; and he *lays siege to it*, or declares the city should be besieged by surrounding it. In all this scenery, the text, says Ezekiel, was a sign to the house of Israel, or, in other words, a type of what the Chaldean king and his army should act against Jerusalem. See Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 170.

*Ver. 4. Lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it*] By the *iniquity* is meant the punishment of the iniquity of the house of Israel ; and though several commentators interpret this passage of what was past, there seems no doubt that it was intended to foretel and pre-signify what was future ; namely, how many years the children of Israel and Judah were to suffer the punishment of their iniquity ; but we should observe, that in the three hundred and ninety days are not only denoted the three hundred and ninety years during which the children of Israel were to suffer the punishment of their iniquity, but also the three hundred and ninety days themselves, during which Jerusalem was to be besieged and reduced to the utmost distress by famine. Compare the 11th with the 16th verse. Ezekiel takes meat and drink by measure for three hundred and ninety days, the meaning whereof is explained in the 16th and 17th verses ; namely, that the famine should

it: *according* to the number of days that thou shalt lie upon it, thou shalt bear their iniquity.

5 For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

6 And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.

7 Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm *shall be* uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it.

8 And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one

side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege.

9 ¶ Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, *according* to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof.

10 And thy meat which thou shalt eat *shall be* by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it.

11 Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin: from time to time shalt thou drink.

12 And thou shalt eat it *as* barley-cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight.

should rage for so many days in Jerusalem: but the same Ezekiel lying upon his side pre-signifies how long Israel and Judah should lie under the punishment of their iniquity; namely, Israel three hundred and ninety, and Judah forty years. But this matter, says Calmet, is so pregnant with difficulties, that it requires a whole dissertation to consider it.

*Ver. 5.] Three hundred and ninety days]* This number of years, see ver. 6. will take us back, with sufficient exactness, from the year in which Jerusalem was sacked by Nebuchadnezzar to the first year of Jeroboam's reign, when national idolatry began in Israel.

*Ver. 6. Forty days]* Reckon near fifteen years and six months in the reign of Manasseh, two years in that of Amon, three months in that of Jehoahaz, eleven years in that of Jehoikim, three months and ten days in that of Jehoiachin, and eleven years in that of Zedekiah; and there arises a period of forty years, during which gross idolatry was practised in the kingdom of Judah. Manasseh's reformation, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 13. is supposed to have lasted during the remainder of his reign; and Josiah was uniformly a good king. Ib. xxxiv. 2. Forty days may have been employed in spoiling and desolating the city and temple.

*Ver. 7. And thine arm shall be uncovered]* *Shall be extended.* Houbigant. The habits of the ancients were so contrived, that the right hand was disengaged from the upper garment, that they might be more ready for action. See Isai. lii. 10.

*Ver. 8. The days of thy siege]* That is, the three hundred and ninety days' siege of Jerusalem, mentioned in the preceding verse. That siege, from the beginning to the ending of it, lasted seventy-seven months, as appears from 2 Kings, xxv. 1—4. But the king of Egypt coming to relieve the city occasioned the raising of the siege for some time. So that it may reasonably be gathered from the authority of the text, joined to the circumstances of the

history, that the siege lasted about thirteen months, or three hundred and ninety days. See Archbishop Usher's Annals, and Calmet.

*Ver. 9. Take—wheat, &c.]* In time of scarcity, it is usual to mix a great deal of the coarse kinds of grain with a little of the better sort, to make the provisions last the longer. Ezekiel was commanded to do this, to signify the scarcity which the inhabitants should suffer during the siege. The *twenty shekels*, in the next verse, amount to about ten ounces; and the *sixth part of an hin*, ver. 11. is about a pint and a half. See Cumberland's Weights and Measures.

*Ver. 10. From time to time shalt thou eat it]* *And thou shalt eat it at certain hours:* that is to say, at the different and stated hours of the day. Houbigant.

*Ver. 11. The sixth part of an hin]* An hin was about ten pints. The prophet was to take this pittance from day to day, and in small portions from time to time of the same day, while he subjected himself to public notice. At other seasons he might be left to his natural liberty. The act denoted scarcity during the siege.

The humane Mr. Howard allows a prisoner “a pound and a half of good household bread a day, and a quart of good beer: besides twice a day a quart of warm soup made from pease, rice, milk, or barley.” 4to. ed. 3. p. 40.

*Ver. 12. Thou shalt bake, &c.]* See Lam. iv. 5. and 1 Sam. ii. 8. where the applicableness of the account concerning the frequent burning of dung in the East, to the case of Ezekiel, is visible. Commentators have remarked something of it; but I do not remember to have met with any who have thoroughly entered into the spirit of the divine command: they only observe, that several nations make use of cow-dung for fuel. The prophet was first enjoined to make use of human dung in the preparation of his food, though at length he obtained permission to use cow-dung for the baking of that bread, which was

to

13 And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them.

14 Then said I, Ah, LORD God, behold, my soul hath not been polluted: for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth.

15 Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given

thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith.

16 ¶ Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment:

17 That they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consume away for their iniquity.

to be expressive of the miserable food that Israel should be obliged to eat in their dispersion among the Gentiles. Had this been ordered at first, it would by no means have fully or sufficiently expressed those necessities, and that filthiness in their way of living, to which they were to be reduced; for many of the eastern people very commonly use cow-dung in the baking of their bread; he therefore was ordered to make use of human dung, which was terribly significant of the extremities which they were to undergo: no nation made use of that horrid kind of fuel; whereas the other was very common, though it is not very agreeable for the purpose; the bread so baked being burnt, smoaky, and disagreeably tasted. If *cow-dung* was frequently used in Palestine for fuel, as we have reason to think *wood* was not more plentiful there anciently, when the country was much fuller of inhabitants, than it is now (see Lam. v. 4.); its extreme slowness in burning must make the quickness of the fire of thorns very observable, and give life to that passage in Ecclef. vii. 6. *As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool*, and to some other places, which have not, I think, been duly observed. The contrast is extremely remarkable. La Roque, taking notice of the excessive slowness of the one, informs us, that it is a common thing among the Arabs on this account to threaten a person with burning him in cow-dung, when they would menace him with a dreadful lingering punishment. On the other hand, every one must be apprized of the short-lived violence of the fire of thorns, furze, and things of that kind: but to make the thought complete, it is necessary to add, that cow-dung, this very slow fuel, is that which is commonly used; and thorns, &c. but seldom. See *Observations*, p. 140. and Pf. lviii. 9. How thankful should we be for the plenty of good fuel that we enjoy!

*Ver. 13. Eat their defiled bread, &c.]* The prophet, speaking above of eating and drinking by weight and measure, foretels the famine in Jerusalem; now, in the bread baked with dung is pre-signified the unclean bread which the children of Israel were to eat among the Gentiles; as also the three hundred and ninety days in the different actions of the prophet adumbrated, as we have observed, both how many years the children of Israel should be punished, and how many days the famine should continue in Jerusalem. It is remarkable, that the prophet foretels that the children of Israel should eat defiled bread among

the Gentiles, but not those of Judah, who were to preserve themselves more pure. Hosea threatens the Israelites in the same manner, ch. ix. 3. See Calmet and Houbigant.

*Ver. 14. Abominable flesh]* This probably means whatever was unclean and particularly forbidden by the Mosaic law. See Lev. vii. 18. xix. 7. Isai. lxxv. 4.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Whether the transactions mentioned in this chapter were done in reality or in vision only is disputed (see the Critical Annotations). It is contended by some against the reality, that the position, without a miracle, could not be kept so long, and that the prophet is spoken of as sitting in his house before the expiration of the days. Compare ch. i. 1, 2. viii. 1. And as for the bread which the prophet is commanded to eat, it seems a severity to which he would scarcely be called. Others, and those too of greatest weight, support the reality of the transaction: the things are spoken of as facts; by these he was to prophesy, when his lips were silent; he was to do this in the sight of the people. His situation or disagreeable diet being enjoined of God for purposes of his glory, he would be comfortably supported under it; and that he really used the bread spoken of, ver. 9, his prayer, ver. 14, strongly implies.

1. On a tile he is commanded to pourtray the siege of Jerusalem, surrounded with mounts, bulwarks, and battering rams; and the iron pan set between him and the city, against which, as the representative of the Chaldean army, he lays siege, signifies the strength of their works as a wall of iron compassing the city, and the safety in which the besiegers lay, being thus covered; and their fixed resolution to carry the place is implied by the prophet's face set against Jerusalem, and his arm made bare.

2. He is ordered to lie on his left side three hundred and ninety days, and forty days on his right; or to accomplish the number of three hundred and ninety days for Israel, with forty for Judah, bearing their iniquity, the punishment of it, a day for a year.

3. Bound thus by the divine order as Ezekiel was, so should the Chaldean army be, nor stir from the place till they had carried it; and the three hundred and ninety days, during which the prophet lay on his side, may signify the duration of the siege; for though it continued seventeen months in all, 2 Kings, xxv. 1—4. yet if the interruption

## C H A P. V.

*Under the type of hair, is shewed the judgment of Jerusalem for their rebellion, by famine, sword, and dispersion.*

[Before Christ 594.]

**A**ND thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the *hair*.

2 Thou shalt burn with fire a third part

in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part; and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them.

3 Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.

4 Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

interruption given to it by the Egyptians, Jer. xxxvii. 5. be deducted, the close siege might not last more than those days.

4. In this way Ezekiel must prophesy, not in words, but by works, which speak strongest, and would leave them inexcusable if they refused to pay attention to them.

2dly, To affect their minds with the terribleness of the famine, which would be the consequence of the siege, the prophet, during the three hundred and ninety days, must use the most wretched provision, and in the most scanty measure.

1. His bread is ordered him of the vilest sort, *beans, lentils, millet, fitches*, mixed with *wheat, and barley*. To such distress would they be reduced, that the very provender for their cattle would be greedily devoured. They who now live luxuriously know not what straits they may be driven to ere they die.

2. He is to be very sparing of this vile food, eating his bread by weight, and drinking water by measure, allowed barely a sufficiency to keep him alive; a token of their great straits, and their obstinacy to hold out to the very last morsel, Jer. xxxvii. 21. *Note*; When God's glory requires it of us, we must not hesitate to endure any hardship, and deny ourselves the lawful comforts of life.

3. He is to bake his bread with human ordure dried, in the sight of the people, that they might be affected with the grievousness of the famine, where fuel as well as food would be wanting, and no distinction be made between clean and unclean. The prophet makes no objection to the wretchedness of the food; but, apprehending that ceremonial defilement would thence accrue to him, from every kind of which, as a priest, he had ever carefully abstained, he prays, if God pleases, for some mitigation in this point; and the Lord permits him to use *cow's dung instead of man's*. *Note*; (1.) The fear of sin affects the gracious soul more than any thing beside. (2.) God's condescension to the scruples of Ezekiel should teach us to use the like tenderness towards our brethren, and not to grieve their weak consciences.

4. The intention of God's orders to Ezekiel is explained. He is a sign to the people. So sore shall be the famine during the siege of Jerusalem, that the little bread which remained should be used with the strictest care, in order to enable them the longer to hold out; yet, with *astonishment* they will find all their measures broken, their resistance fruitless, and their affairs growing each day more despe-

rate, *consuming away for their iniquity, and astonished one with another*, unable to relieve or help each other, and shocked to behold the dire effects of famine, fatigue, and sickness, which made the besieged appear rather as spectres than men. And at last, delivered into the hands of the heathen, they should be compelled to eat the defiled bread of the Gentiles, as loathsome as the cakes which the prophet baked. Such are the sad effects of sin; and abused plenty thus justly ends in pining want.

## C H A P. V.

*Ver. 1. Take thee a barber's razor*] The balances were a symbol of the divine justice, as the razor was of the divine anger; the former signifying his equity, the *hairs* the Jews, and the dividing of the hair the punishment inflicted upon individuals. The author of the *Observations* has remarked, that among the Arabs there cannot be a greater stamp of infamy, than to cut off any one's beard; and that many among them would prefer death to this kind of punishment. And as they would think it a grievous affliction to lose it, so they carry things so far as to beg for the sake of it; "By your beard, by the life of your beard, do." In like manner, some of their benedictions are, "God preserve your blessed beard; God pour his blessings on your beard;" and when they would express their value for a thing, they say, "It is worth more than his beard." I must confess, continues this writer, that I never had so clear an apprehension as after I had read these accounts, of the intended energy of the thought of Ezekiel in the verse before us, when the inhabitants of Jerusalem are compared to the hair of the prophet's head and beard. The passage seems to signify, that, though the inhabitants of Jerusalem had been as dear to God as the hair of an Indian beard to its owner, yet that they should be taken away and consumed; one part by pestilence and famine, another part by the sword, and the third by the calamities of exile. See *Observations*, p. 261.

*Ver. 2. When the days of the siege are fulfilled*] While the days of the siege shall continue: that is, of the visionary siege spoken of in the preceding chapter. This verse is fully explained by the 12th.

*Ver. 3. Take—a few—and bind, &c.*] Hereby is figured the remnant of the Jews who should be left in the land under Gedaliah; and in the next verse the destruction which should come upon them also. See Jer. xl. 5, 6. xlv. 11, &c. Houbigant renders the last clause of the next verse, *From that fire a flame shall burst forth, &c.*

*Ver.*

5 ¶ Thus saith the LORD God; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries *that are round about her.*

6 And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that *are round about her*: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them.

7 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that *are round about you*, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that *are round about you*;

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, *am* against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.

9 And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.

10 Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.

11 Wherefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord

GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.

12 ¶ A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.

13 Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken *it* in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them.

14 Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that *are round about thee*, in the sight of all that pass by.

15 So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that *are round about thee*, when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I the LORD have spoken *it*.

16 When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for *their* destruction, and which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread:

*Ver. 5. This is Jerusalem]* “This Jerusalem, against which thou prophesiedst, was placed in the midst of the heathen nations. It made a figure among them on account of my temple, and the tokens of my presence. “*It was a city set on a hill*, that it might be a pattern of religion, holiness, and virtue to them.” There are some who take this expression, *In the midst of the nations*, literally, and suppose that Jerusalem is in the centre of the world. See Calmet.

*Ver. 7. Ye multiplied—neither have done according to the judgments of the nations]* *Ye have sinned—but have done after the manners of the heathen.* Houbigant. See ch. xi. 12. God here calls the law of conscience and of nations *his statutes and judgments*; which the Jews had more infamously transgressed than the Gentiles, who had not the written law of God.

*Ver. 9. The like]* The national punishment of the Jews, comprehending what they suffered from Nebuchadrezzar, Titus, and Adrian, has been remarkably signal.

*Ver. 11. Will I also diminish]* *Will I cut thee off.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 12. And I will draw out a sword after them]* That is, “Mine anger shall still pursue thee even into countries “*whither thou art banished and carried captive.*” This was particularly fulfilled in those who retired into Egypt, and has been remarkably verified in the many persecutions and miseries which the Jews have undergone at different times in most parts of Europe since their general dispersion.

*Ver. 13. Thus shall mine anger be accomplished]* *For my anger shall be accomplished, and then I will comfort myself, when my fury shall rest upon them; and then they shall know that I am the LORD, who in mine anger have foretold these things, when my fury shall be accomplished upon them.* Houbigant. The ideas and expressions in this verse are borrowed from the passions of men; who find some ease and rest in their minds upon bringing offenders to condign punishment.

*Ver. 15. So it shall be, &c.]* *And the reproach and the obloquy shall be a warning and an amazement, &c.*

*Ver. 17. Famine and evil beasts]* That is, by a figure called by the Greeks *iv dia dvoiv*, the hungry and the evil beast.



17 So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee: and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee;

and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken it.

*beast.* Instead of *blood*, Houbigant reads *death or mortality*.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jerusalem's ruin is here represented by another sign.

1. The prophet must shave his head and beard, and carefully weigh and divide the hair into three parcels; one third must be burnt, another be cut in pieces, and the other scattered in the wind, a few hairs excepted, which he must bind in his skirts, and then quickly take thence, and burn in the fire.

2. The meaning of this is, that Jerusalem, which had been the head of the nations, and full of inhabitants, numerous as these hairs, must undergo the foulest disgrace, and be covered with bitterest grief: weighed in the balances of God's justice, the punishment suitable to their guilt is determined. The city must be taken and burnt; one third of the inhabitants consumed in the flames, or by the famine; another slain with the sword during the siege, or attempting to escape; the other be dispersed into all the neighbouring countries; not only led captive into Chaldea, but flying for refuge to Egypt, Moab, and Ammon, whither the sword of the king of Babylon would pursue them. A few under Gedaliah seemed reserved for mercy, but even among them the fire kindles, their ruler is slain, and this remnant miserably consumed; thus will God overcome when he judgeth. If sinners will obstinately persist in their wickedness, utter destruction will infallibly overtake them.

2dly, The explanation of the foregoing sign is here given at large, *This is Jerusalem*; the name of the thing signified being given to the sign, as *this is my body*.

1. Jerusalem was highly honoured, set in the midst of the nations, and exalted in privileges above them all, as a beacon on a hill, designed to diffuse the light of those divine oracles which were entrusted to her. For when God hath given distinguished mercies, he justly expects a suitable return.

2. Her provocations were multiplied, great, and aggravated. *She hath changed my judgments into wickedness*; not only neglecting God's commands, and slighting his institutions, but introducing the idolatries and abomination of the heathen; and, as if it was not enough to be like them, the profaneness and impiety of Israel were more than the nations round about them; yea, they did not according to the judgments of the nations round about them; they were more abandoned in wickedness, and shewed none of that respect for the true God which they paid to their idol deities. And to such a pitch of hardened insolence and impudence in sin were they grown, that in the very house erected for God's honour and worship, there did they set up their hated idols, and offered their detestable sacrifices before them. *Note*; (1.) Many a virtuous heathen will rise up and condemn the immoral lives of professing Christians. (2.) When they who have been God's people by profession turn apostates, they usually grow most abandoned.

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3. Her punishment shall be according to her sins; terrible beyond what any nation before ever did, or ever shall again suffer; and public, *in the midst of thee*, that all around might behold God's righteous judgment, and be warned by her plagues.

[1.] God himself makes bare his holy arm. *I, even I, am against thee*; whatever instruments he employed, the destruction was from the Lord: *in anger and in fury, and in furious rebukes*, as a man exasperated with the most atrocious provocations; yea, all the fierceness of his wrath shall be accomplished, so entire shall be their ruin; and his fury shall rest upon them for a long season; they shall lie under the marks of his fearful vengeance, and this without mercy or pity: yea, so far from it, he will (speaking after the manner of men) delight in their misery; *I will be comforted*, in thus easing himself of his enemies under whom the very earth groaned, and in glorifying his justice and truth by the execution of these most righteous judgments. And then at last when they feel, they will know the truth of his threatenings, and his jealousy in vindicating his own glory and the honour of his government. *Note*; (1.) Woe to the sinner that provokes a jealous God: when his wrath is kindled, yea, but for a moment, who may abide it? (2.) The misery of the damned shall result to God's glory; and he will, without the least impeachment of his mercy, approve of their torment, seeing that it is the just reward of their deeds.

[2.] The particular judgments threatened are many and grievous. (1.) *Famine*, sharp and deadly as a poisoned arrow; so raging, that all natural affection should be extinguished thereby, and fathers eat their sons, and sons feed upon their murdered fathers. (2.) *Dispersion*; the remnant which survive the siege shall be miserably scattered in all lands, like Cain under a curse, and vagabonds in the earth. (3.) *Pestilence*, the usual consequence of famine; which should devour a third part. (4.) *The sword*, which should not only destroy about a third part during the siege, but pursue the fugitives, and bring them at last to a miserable end. (5.) *Evil beasts*; not merely enemies, as savage as lions, but every furious beast of prey; which should break in upon them in herds, bereave them of their dearest relatives, and devour those who fled into the mountains and deserts for shelter. For it is as vain to fly from God's vengeance, as to resist it.

[3.] Neighbouring nations would insult them on their fall, reproach them for their wickedness, ridicule their vain confidence; and while they were amazed and astonished at the terribleness of the judgment, would receive instruction, and be warned of the dreadful danger of provoking such a jealous God. *Note*; When the judgments of God are seen in the earth, the inhabitants thereof will learn righteousness, and repent of those sins which they see productive of such unutterable misery in others.

[4.] The veracity of God is engaged for executing the words of his threatenings. *I, the Lord, have spoken it*, able to perform it, and who cannot lie, or repent; there-

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fore

## C H A P. VI.

*The judgment of Israel for their idolatry. A remnant shall be restored. The faithful are exhorted to lament their calamities.*

[Before Christ 594.]

**A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, set thy face towards the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them.

3 And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, *even* I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.

4 And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain *men* before your idols.

5 And I will lay the dead carcases of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

6 In all your dwelling-places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished.

7 And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

8 ¶ Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may

have *some* that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.

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

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

11 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.

12 He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my fury upon them.

13 Then shall ye know that I *am* the LORD, when their slain *men* shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet favour to all their idols.

fore the judgment is infallibly sure to come. And however, while the threatened vengeance is distant, sinners are apt to despise it; *when* it is accomplished, they shall know and feel the truth of those threatenings, which they would not believe from the mouth of the prophet.

## C H A P. VI.

*Ver. 2. Of Israel*] "Israel being carried captive, Judah is called Israel; and perhaps possessed a great part of the country." Secker.

*Ver. 3. To the mountains, &c.*] Every part of the country had been defiled with idolatry. The altars built for idol worship were generally placed upon mountains and hills: the shady valleys and river-sides were also used for the same purpose, particularly for the sacrificing of children to Moloch: so that the prophet denounces a general judgment against the whole defiled and idolatrous country. By the *mountains of Israel*, says Houbigant, we are to

understand the whole country. The reader will observe the great similarity of the denunciations in this prophet with those in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. See particularly Deut. xii. 2. Jer. ii. 20. iii. 6. Ezek. xviii. 6. Philip II. king of Macedon, in his expedition against Sparta, sacrificed to the gods on each of the hills, one of which was called Olympus, and the other Eva. Polyb. l. v. p. 372. ed. Calaub. Cyrus, just before his death, offered sacrifices to Jupiter, the sun, and the other gods, ἐπι τῶν ἀκρ. v. Cyropæd. l. viii. p. 647. ed. Hutchinson. 4to.

*Ver. 9. Because I am broken, &c.*] *Because I have broken their adulterous heart, which hath departed from me, and their adulterous eyes, which followed after their idols, &c.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 14. Wilderness towards Diblath*] *Wilderness of Diblath.* Diblath was in the land of Moab (Numb. xxxiii, 46, &c.), and was part of that terrible wilderness mentioned by Moses, Deut. viii. 15.

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14 So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness towards Diblath, in all their habitations: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

C H A P. VII.

*The final desolation of Israel. The mournful repentance of them who escape. The enemies defile the sanctuary because of the Israelites' abominations. Under the type of a chain, is shewed their miserable captivity.*

[Before Christ 594.]

**M**OREOVER the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here repeated denunciations of vengeance against a rebellious people.

1. The prophet is commanded to set *his face towards the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them*, against the whole land, and the inhabitants thereof; against the greatest among them, particularly those who had been the ringleaders in wickedness: or the mountains are addressed, as if the rocks thereof were less obdurate, and the inanimate earth more ready to hear, than that stupid people; and he is to set his face against *the hills, the rivers, and the valleys* also, the especial scenes of their idolatry; or as descriptive of the whole country, against which judgment is denounced.

2. Utter destruction is threatened from God both against the idols and their worshippers; for though the executioners of his wrath were the Chaldeans, the sword in their hands was his. So far from being able to protect their votaries, these mock deities would be unable to defend themselves; their high places should be destroyed, their altars desolate, their images broken, and these *dungbill gods* cast into the dust: their worshippers should share their fate; slain before their idols, their dead corpses should be laid at their feet, and their bones scattered around these hateful altars: universal desolations should spread through the land, the cities be destroyed, every dwelling-place ruined; and those high places and altars, defiled by their abominations, be now more defiled with the blood and carcases of the slain: *and ye shall know that I am the Lord*; by terrible experience convinced of the difference between those senseless idols which they served, and that only living and true God whom they had slighted.

2dly, When God executes judgment, he still remembers mercy. Though none should be spared in Jerusalem, a remnant of the dispersed shall yet be rescued from the devouring sword.

1. They shall *remember me*. Either, [1.] *The wrath of God, visible now in their sufferings among the nations whither they shall be carried captives*, would drive them to him, afflictions being often the most salutary means of recovering the backsliding soul: or, [2.] They would be drawn by *the tender mercies of God, whom they had slighted, who still yearned over them, though so highly provoked*

2 Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the land of Israel: An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land.

3 Now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations.

4 And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

by their ungrateful departures from him, and who was broken with their *whorish heart*, grieved to behold their spiritual adulteries and attachment to their idols. *Note*: Nothing wounds the awakened sinner's conscience more deeply, than a sense of his base ingratitude, and his grieving the holy spirit of God.

2. This will produce self-loathing and genuine repentance. *They shall loath themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations*; they will be brought, by remembering God, to a knowledge of their own abominations; and will discover the malignity of their sins, and the multitude of evils that they had overlooked; and this will produce self-abhorrence and self loathing; even though God hath forgiven them, they never can forgive themselves.

3. They will then give glory to God. *They shall know that I am the Lord*, acknowledging the truth of his word, the justice of their punishment, and the wonders of his grace; and this will be the case with every truly penitent soul.

3dly, Since the Jews in general were too unaffected both with their sufferings and sins, the prophet is ordered,

1. To express the strongest sensations of grief and anguish for them, if it might contribute to awaken them from their insensibility, when they saw him so deeply affected on their account: *Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas! for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel*; their sins were grievous, and their judgment would be terrible; devoted to famine, pestilence, and the sword. *Note*: God's faithful ministers have the tenderest sensibility towards miserable sinners, and often weep over those who never shed a tear for themselves.

2. To repeat the same awful warnings as he had done before, that they may have line upon line, and be assured of the certainty of the impending judgments. In vain is flight when God pursues; *he that is far off shall die of the pestilence*; in vain is resistance, when the war is of the Lord: *he that is near, and stands on his defence, shall fall by the sword*, or perish by the famine in the straits of the siege. Since God's fury is provoked, he will accomplish their destruction. Before those hated idols, in every place where they had offered incense unto them, shall their putrid corpses lie unburied, a manifest token of

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God's

5 Thus saith the Lord GOD ; An evil, an only evil, behold, is come.

6 An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee ; behold, it is come.

7 The morning is come upon thee, O thou that dwellest in the land: the time is come, the day of trouble *is* near, and not the sounding again of the mountains.

8 Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations.

9 And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations *that* are in the midst of thee ; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD that smiteth.

10 Behold, the day, behold, it is come: the morning is gone forth ; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded.

11 Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them *shall remain*, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs: neither *shall there be* wailing for them.

12 The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn: for wrath *is* upon all the multitude thereof.

13 For the feller shall not return to that which is sold, although they were yet alive: for the vision *is* touching the whole multitude thereof, *which* shall not return ; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life.

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

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

16 ¶ But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity.

17 All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak *as* water.

18 They shall also gird *themselves* with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them ; and shame *shall be* upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads.

19 They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD: they shall

God's righteous vengeance. More desolate than the great and terrible wilderness towards Diblath, Deut. viii. 15. shall the whole land be made. And since they refuse to fly to him, and prove his mercy, God will force them to know him as the sin-avenging God, in the terrible judgments which he will inflict upon them.

#### CHAP. VII.

Ver. 2. *Also, thou son of man, &c.*] *Thou son of man shalt say these things; Thus saith the Lord God concerning the land of Israel.* Houbigant.

Ver. 5. *An evil, an only evil, &c.*] *Behold, calamity shall come after calamity.* Houbigant.

Ver. 7. *The morning is come upon thee*] *Straits come upon thee, O thou, &c. The day of trouble is near, and not of mirth.* Houbigant. Those who understand the passage according to our translation, suppose the meaning to be, "God's judgments shall overtake thee speedily and unexpectedly;" and that the expression alludes to the time when magistrates used to pronounce sentence on offenders, which was in the morning. See Jer. xxi. 12. *The sounding again of the mountains* is supposed to refer to the joyful sounds echoed from the mountains at the time of the vintage and other similar festivities. See Isai. xvi. 9, &c.

Ver. 10. *The morning is gone forth*] *The bud is put forth, or hath arisen, &c.* Houbigant. Possibly the prophet, using the word מַטֵּה *matteh*, which signifies both a rod and a tribe, intends to point out the once flourishing state of the tribe of Judah. The next verse has greatly perplexed the commentators; every one of whom, says Houbigant, I have consulted, but in vain; and think the following translation gives the true sense of it: *Violence hath burst forth from the rod: safety shall not proceed from them nor from their riches, nor from their agitations: there shall not be any rest for them.* See his note.

Ver. 12. *For wrath is upon all the multitude thereof. For my wrath is upon all their riches.* Houbigant.

Ver. 13. *Although they were yet alive*] *Nor shall their agreements stand among them while living; for their agreements shall not cause their riches to return: whoever maketh an agreement in his iniquity, it shall not be confirmed.* Houbigant; who renders the last clause in the next verse like that in the 12th.

Ver. 16. *Like doves of the valleys*] *There can be no reason, says Houbigant, why it should be rendered, doves of the valleys; the true rendering is, like mourning doves: they shall be in the mountains mourning like doves. Death shall consume them every one in his iniquity.*

Ver.

not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumbling-block of their iniquity.

20 ¶ As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty: but they made the images of their abominations *and* of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from them.

21 And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it.

22 My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret *place*: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.

23 ¶ Make a chain: for the land is full

of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.

24 Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be defiled.

25 Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and *there shall be none*.

26 Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients.

27 The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the

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*Ver. 19. Their gold shall be removed] Shall be vile refuse, or, become despicable. Houbigant reads the last clause, After their iniquity hath brought on their ruin.*

*Ver. 20. As for the beauty of his ornament] Houbigant's translation is, They made of it [the gold] beautiful and splendid ornaments, with which they adorned the abominable images of their gods: therefore will I cause it to be esteemed impure among them.*

*Ver. 22. And they shall pollute my secret place] My treasures shall be esteemed as profane; for the robbers shall come, who shall pollute them. Houbigant. Others understand this of the profanation of the temple, and of the Holy of Holies, by the Chaldeans.*

*Ver. 23. Make a chain] That is, as emblematical of the approaching captivity, when king and people should be carried in chains to Babylon. See 2 Kings, xxv. 7. Jer. xl. 1.*

*Ver. 24. The worst of the heathen] The shepherds of the heathen. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 27. I will do unto them after their way, &c.] So will I do unto them, as have been their own ways; I will judge them as they judged; for in the 23d verse it is said that the land was full of bloody crimes or judgments; because the blood of the innocent was shed by unjust judgment. Here it is said that those guilty of shedding blood should themselves suffer the punishment of it.*

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, Fair warning is here given to a careless people; and with great earnestness the prophet speaks, if so be he might awaken them from their lethargy.

1. Their time of judgment is come, their end at hand, their destruction impending; and this is urged with a great variety of expressions, to shew the certainty, nearness, and terribleness of the calamity. The whole land is doomed to ruin. *An evil*, such as was never heard of before, approached. Their desolations watched for them. The dawn of their calamity was already broke upon them,

*the day of trouble* swiftly advanced; not a mere sound, like the distant echo of a man's voice between the mountains, but a terrible shout of the Chaldean hosts already at the walls of the city. *Note*; (1.) The end of all things is at hand. Are we ready? (2.) Though God's patience bears long with impenitent sinners, he will surely visit them at the appointed time, and the evil of eternal vengeance will overtake them.

2. Their destruction is from God's wrath; their provocations had awakened *his fury*; and now in full vials, he will *pour* it out on their devoted heads, and *accomplish* his anger; giving it full scope; no pity or mercy shall mitigate the judgment: and woe to those against whom God thus rises up as an enemy!

3. God herein acts with strictest justice. The sentence passed on them would be in consequence of an impartial trial, and the righteous recompense of their great abominations. These being found in the midst of them unrepented of, wrath to the uttermost comes upon them. *The rod hath blossomed*, the rod of universal wickedness, and they gloried in it; *pride hath budded*, that sin peculiarly hateful to God; and *violence is risen up*, a scene of oppression and injustice appears; and the rod of upright government is turned into a *rod of wickedness* to smite the innocent. Though some understand these expressions as signifying the Chaldean monarch, the rod of God's anger, swelling with pride, and ready to break in violently upon them as a flood, to punish them for their iniquities.

4. The ruin coming upon them would be universal. *None of them shall remain*, the whole nation utterly wasted by famine, pestilence, and the sword; princes and people shall fall together unlamented, none surviving to bemoan them; or the few who were left wholly engroined with care about themselves. *The buyer should not rejoice, nor the seller mourn*, because both now would be on a level, alike captives, and removed from their own land, and no year of jubilee cause the possessions to revert to their former owners,

hands of the people of the land shall be troubled: I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

owners, *although they were yet alive*; the whole multitude being doomed to a seventy years' servitude in Babylon. In vain, on the approach of the enemy, they blew the trumpet to oppose them; *for none goeth to the battle*; their courage is lost; *the wrath* of God upon them dispirits the bravest, and they fall an easy prey. The sword consumes without, the famine and pestilence within; and neither the city nor country can afford the least protection from these desolating judgments; and they who thought to strengthen themselves in their iniquity, and out-brave the threatened vengeance, now find themselves terribly disappointed. *Note*; (1.) Multitudes are no protection from the wrath of God; sinners shall no more escape because they are many, than because they are mighty. (2.) They who strengthen themselves in wickedness will find their rebel arm impotent and broken when God awakes to judgment.

5. God's hand will be visible in their sufferings. *And ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth*. Though the Chaldean army be employed, they shall be convinced that God's arm is made bare against them, and in their sufferings read his fearful indignation.

2dly, We have the miserable condition of the few who survive the ruin of their country.

1. They are men of sorrows, and vagabonds in the earth. On the solitary mountains, whither they have fled for refuge, like doves of the valley, they mourn *every one for his iniquity*; either for the punishment of it only; or with deep anguish bewailing their sins, which were the cause of their sufferings, weak as water to resist their enemies, and abandoning themselves to despair in horrors of conscience, or terrified by continual fear; covered with shame and confusion because of their transgressions, or of their present wretched state; girt with sackcloth, and baldness on their heads, the expressive signs of deep unutterable anguish. *Note*; (1.) Sin and sorrow are inseparable. (2.) Our afflictions are then gracious, when they lead us to mourn for our iniquity. (3.) The sinner's confidence will end in despair and fruitless everlasting wailings.

2. Their riches profit not in this day of wrath. They had idolised the shining mammon, and it had been *the stumbling-block of their iniquity*, while they placed that affection and dependence upon their gold which they withdrew from God: but now they are made to know their folly and their sin, compelled to cast away their gold and silver as what would retard their flight, and unable with these to satisfy the cravings of hunger, or purchase a moment's rest or ease to their souls. Some understand by the gold and silver their idols made of these precious metals, on which they trusted, but found their expectations from them terribly deceived. *Note*; (1.) Money is a dangerous snare; the inordinate love of it has been the ruin of millions. (2.) The greatest wealth can profit us

nothing in a day of wrath; it cannot stay the arrests of death, or procure in hell a drop of water to cool a flaming tongue.

3. Their temple is destroyed, magnificent and adorned as it had been, not merely by the immense profusion of gold and silver and precious stones bestowed upon it, but infinitely more by the residence of the king of glory. They had polluted it; and dared within these sacred walls to erect their detested idols; *therefore have I set it far from them*; removing them as captives into a distant land, and giving up the sanctuary to be trodden under foot by the heathen, to be polluted, profaned, plundered, and burnt, by the Chaldeans first, and afterwards by the Romans. *My face will I turn also from them*; deserting the Jews in their distress, or not displeased with the ravages of their wicked enemies, but suffering them uncontrolled to spread havoc and desolation on every side. *Note*; They who forsake God may expect that he will forsake them in the day of their calamity.

3dly, We have,

1. The charge laid against the Jewish people, for which they are brought to God's bar. *Make a chain* to bind the prisoner, and bring him before the judge; or to lead them into an ignominious captivity; *for the land is full of bloody crimes, or judgments of blood*: such crimes as by the law were capital, and called for the blood of the criminal; *the city is full of violence*, a scene of oppression, rapine, and injustice. And when sin in a nation is thus triumphant, her destruction cannot be far distant.

2. The sentence pronounced. God threatens to *bring upon them the worst of the heathen*, the most savage and barbarous of the human species. The noble, the rich, the proud oppressors, with all their pomp, must bow before them, and the fruits of their injustice be for a prey; *their holy places shall be defiled*, or *they that sanctify them*, their priests and Levites, slain, and lying in their blood. Repeated rumours of the approaching enemy shall terrify them; *mischiefs upon mischiefs* shall overwhelm them, and destruction without remedy seize them at last: no peace will be granted them by their exasperated foes. *They shall in their distress seek a vision of the prophet*, whom they before despised and rejected; *but none shall be vouchsafed them*; *for the law shall perish from the priest*, he shall not be able to advise or comfort them; *and counsel shall perish from the ancients*, given up to infatuation, and become foolish in their imaginations; so that they would be without resource. *Their king shall mourn a prisoner, clothed with desolation*, blind and in chains; *the hands of the people be troubled*, weak, and unable to resist; God visiting now upon them their iniquities, and making them know his almighty power and vindictive wrath: for God will make himself known, either in mercy to his saints, or in vengeance to his enemies.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Ezekiel, in a vision of God at Jerusalem, is shewed the image of jealousy, the chambers of imagery, the mourners for Tammuz, and the worshippers towards the sun. God's wrath for their idolatry.*

[Before Christ 594.]

**A**ND it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the

elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me.

2 Then I beheld, and lo, a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber.

3 And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and

## C H A P. VIII.

*Ver. 1. In the sixth year, in the sixth month*] That is, one month after the first vision, which Ezekiel had in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. See ch. i. 2. This chapter, and the three following, make but one vision, whereof it is proper to give a general idea, that we may not too much divide the reader's attention. Ezekiel is transported to Jerusalem, and finds himself in the Spirit near the north gate of the temple, which led on the north side into the court of the priests. There he saw the glory of the Lord, in the same circumstances as it appeared to him at the river Chebar. He was first shewn, on one side, an idol of zeal or jealousy. Hence proceeding to the court of the people, he discovered, through an opening which he made in the wall, seventy elders of the people, who worshipped all kinds of figures of animals painted upon the wall. Returning to the north gate, he saw women weeping for Adonis. As he came back again to the court of the priests, he was shewn, between the porch and the altar, men who worshipped the rising sun, with their backs turned toward the sanctuary. These are the contents of chap. viii. At the same time he sees six men enter into the court of the priests, and in the midst of them a seventh, having an inkhorn at his girdle; and immediately the Lord left his throne above the cherubims, and went and placed himself upon the gate of the temple; that is to say, at the entrance of the holy place. From this place the Lord ordered that man of the seven, who had the inkhorn, to mark, with a sign upon the forehead, those who should be spared; and the six others to put to death all who were not so marked. Instantly they begin to execute the command; and Ezekiel, having remained alone among the dead, addresses his prayer to the Lord. During this time the six men return, and inform God what they had done. These are the contents of the ninth chapter. The Lord then orders the man who was clothed in linen to take live coals from the midst of the cherubim, who till then remained in the inner court, and to strew them upon the city. He obeys, and a hand from the cherubim gave him the coals. At the same time, the chariot which bore the throne of the Lord is put in motion, rises into the air, and goes to receive the Lord, who was at the eastern gate of the temple. This is the sum of ch. x. The prophet finds himself immediately transported to the east gate, where were five and twenty men, and among them Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah. God directs him to prophesy against them. He does so; he reproaches them with their violence and their crimes,

and threatens them with the extremest calamities. In the next place, God speaks to him, and foretels that the Jews who reside in the country shall be driven thence for their iniquities; and, on the contrary, that those who were led away captive, and penitently acknowledged their faults, shall return, and re-possess the land. After this, the Lord rises with his chariot over the city, and goes and places himself upon the mountain which lies to the east of Jerusalem. Thus ends the vision, and ch. xi. All this pointed out the reasons which obliged the Lord to give up his people, his city, and his temple; the abominations of that people in public and in private; their crimes, and the violences which had merited this chastisement. But because the Jews, carried away captive with Jeconiah, called upon the Lord, and penitently owned their faults, while those of Jerusalem filled up the measure of their iniquity; God threatens the latter with approaching destruction, and promises the others a happy return to their own country. This is the whole economy of the vision before us, which has been greatly misunderstood by many interpreters. See Calmet.

*Ver. 2. Appearance of fire*] *Of a man.* Houbigant. See ver. 26. of chap. i.

*Ver. 3. Took me by a lock, &c.*] By that time the sins of this rebellious people were ripe for the punishment of their approaching captivity: they had polluted themselves with all kinds of Egyptian abominations, as appears from this famous vision of the prophet, wherein their three capital idolatries are so graphically described. The prophet represents himself as brought in a vision to Jerusalem. And at the door of the inner gate which looketh toward the north, he saw the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. This is a prelude to the visions which describe the various idolatries of the house of Israel, where, in the noblest sketch of an inspired imagination, idolatry is itself personified, and made an idol; and the image sublimely called the image of jealousy; which the prophet explains by observing, that it was that which provoked God to jealousy. He then proceeds to the various scenery of the inspired vision. See the Divine Legation, vol. iii. Houbigant is of opinion, that this image of jealousy represented Mars, because Tammuz is spoken of in the 14th verse, who was certainly the same as Adonis; for each of these idols was in the same part of the temple, and the women weep for Adonis before the image of jealousy, or Mars, who had killed Adonis by means of the boar, through jealousy: but Bishop Warburton's opinion seems preferable. Instead of door of the inner gate, we may read, door, or entry of the gate of the inner court.

*Ver.*



the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where *was* the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.

4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel *was* there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.

5 ¶ Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.

6 He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? *even* the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from

my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations.

7 ¶ And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.

8 Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.

9 And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.

10 So I went in and saw; and behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.

11 And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the

*Ver. 4. Behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there]* To shew that this was the place of his proper and peculiar residence: though images and idols were set up in the precincts of the temple, to provoke him to jealousy. See chap. v. 11.

*Ver. 7—12.] He brought me to the door]* The first inference which may be drawn from these words is, that the superstition here described was Egyptian. This appears from its objects being the gods peculiar to Egypt: *every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts*, ver. 10. which in another verse the same prophet calls, with great propriety and elegance, the *abominations of the eyes of the Israelites*, chap. xx. 7, 8. The second inference is, that they contain a very lively and circumstantial description of the celebrated mysteries of Isis and Osiris. For, 1. The rites are represented as performed in a secret subterraneous place, ver. 7, 8, 9. This secret place was, as the prophet tells us, in the temple: and such kind of places for this use the Egyptians had in their temples, as we learn from a similitude of Plutarch; "like the disposition," says he, "and the ordonnance of their temples; which in one place enlarge and extend themselves in wings and fair and open isles; in another, sink into dark and secret subterraneous vestries, like the Adyta of the Thebans." 2. These rites were celebrated by the Sanhedrim, or the elders, ver. 11. *And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel.* Now it appears from the best accounts that we have of the Egyptian mysteries, that none but princes, rulers, and the wisest of the people, were admitted to their most secret celebrations. 3. The paintings and imagery on the walls of this subterraneous apartment answer exactly to the descriptions which the ancients have given us of the mystic cells of the Egyptians: *Behold every form of creeping things, &c.*, ver. 11. There is a famous antique monument, once a consecrated utensil in the rites of Isis and Osiris, and now well known to the

curious by the name of the *Isiac*, or *Bembine tables*; on which, as appears by the order of the several compartments, is pourtrayed all the imagery which adorned the walls of the *mystic cell*. Now, if we were to describe the engravings of that table, we could not find juster or more emphatical terms, than those which the prophet here employs. The third inference which may be drawn from this vision is, that the Egyptian superstition was that to which the Israelites were more particularly addicted. And thus much may be gathered from ver. 10. We have shewn this to have been a description of an Egyptian mystic cell, which certainly was adorned only with Egyptian gods; and yet these gods are here called, by way of distinction, *all the idols of the house of Israel*; which seems plainly to infer this people's more particular attachment to them. But, the words *house of Israel* being used in a vision describing the idolatries of the house of Judah, we may take it for granted, that in this indefinite number of all the idols of Israel, were eminently included those two prime idols of the house of Israel, the calves of Dan and Beth-el; and the rather for that the original calves held a distinguishing station in the paintings of the mystic cell, as the reader may see by viewing the Bembine table. And this by the way will lead us to the reason of Jeroboam's erecting *two* calves: for they were as we find worshipped in *couples* by the Egyptians, as representing Isis and Osiris. And what is remarkable, the calves were *male* and *female*, as appears from 2 Kings, x. 29. compared with Hosea, x. 5. where in one place the masculine, and in the other the feminine term is employed. But though the Egyptian gods are thus, by way of eminence, called the *gods of the house of Israel*, yet other idols they had besides, and of those good store, as will appear in the sequel; for this prophetic vision is employed in describing the three master-superstitions of this unhappy people, the *Egyptian*, the *Phœnician*, and the *Persian*. The *Egyptian* we have seen.

son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

12 Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark; every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

13 ¶ He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do.

14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD's house which was towards the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these.

16 ¶ And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east: and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

17 ¶ Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for

*Ver. 12. In the dark]* Hence Milton says of Ezekiel with great propriety,

By the vision led,  
His eye survey'd the dark idolatries  
Of alienated Judah.

PARADISE LOST, i. 455.

*Ver. 14. Behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz]* The prophet here refers to the Phœnician or Syrian superstition. *Tammuz* was an idol of Chaldee extraction, as is plain from his name; which also is used for the *tenth month*, reckoning from the autumnal equinox, that is to say, the month of June; and *Tammuz*, as the object of worship, expresses the *solar light* in its perfection, as it is at the summer solstice in the month of June, dispensing heat and its effects, not only to the earth and plants, but also to the bodies of animals. The Vulgate renders *Tammuz* by *Adonis*; and there is no question but *Adonis*, according to the physical theology of the heathens, was the same as the sun. Macrobius, indeed, expressly affirms it. Saturnal. lib. i. c. 21. He says, that the tradition of *Adonis's* being killed by a boar, means the diminution of the sun's light and heat by winter. See Orpheus's Hymn to *Adonis*. This departure of *Adonis*, or the sun, was lamented by the Phœnician and Assyrian women in the most frantic ceremonies of grief, and by most improper and criminal actions: and thus the Jewish women are described by our prophet weeping for *Tammuz* on the fifth day of the sixth month, that is, of August; at which time his descent to hell, and his death by the winter boar, were drawing on apace. *Tammuz* was supposed to have been killed in mount Lebanon, whence flows the river *Adonis*, whereof Mr. Maundrel speaks thus: "We came to a fair large river, doubtless the ancient river *Adonis*, so famous for the idolatrous rites performed here in lamentation of *Adonis*. We had the fortune to see, what may be supposed to be the foundation of that opinion which Lucian relates; namely, that this stream, at certain seasons of the year, especially about the feast of *Adonis*, is of a bloody colour, which the heathens looked upon as proceeding from a kind of sympathy in

"the river for the death of *Adonis*, who was killed by a wild boar in the mountains out of which this stream rises. Something like this we saw actually come to pass; for the water was stained to a surprising redness, and, as we observed in travelling, had discoloured the sea a great way into a reddish hue, occasioned doubtless by a sort of *minium*; or red earth, washed into the river by the violence of the rain." Milton has finely touched upon each of these particulars in the following elegant and melodious lines:

————— *Thammuz* came next behind,  
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allur'd  
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate,  
In amorous ditties all a summer's day;  
While smooth *Adonis*, from his native rock,  
Ran purple to the sea, suppos'd with blood  
Of *Thammuz* yearly wounded: The love-tale  
Infected *Sion's* daughters with like heat,  
Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch  
*Ezekiel* saw, when, by the vision led,  
His eye survey'd the dark idolatries  
Of alienated Judah.

PARADISE LOST, b. i. v. 446, &c.

See Parkhurst on the word תַּמְּוּז *tammuz*, Univ. Hist. vol. i. p. 342. and Lucian. de Deâ Syriâ.

*Ver. 16. And they worshipped the sun toward the east]* This is a description of the Persian superstition. It is to be observed, that when the prophet is bid to turn from the Egyptian to the Phœnician rites, he is then said to look towards the north, the situation of Phœnicia with regard to Jerusalem; consequently he before stood southward, the situation of Egypt with regard to the same place. And when he is bid thence to turn to the inner court of the Lord's house, to see the Persian rites,—this was east, the situation of Persia: with so much exactness of representation is the whole vision conducted. Again; as the mysterious rites of Egypt are said, agreeably to this usage, to be holden in secret by their elders and rulers only, so the Phœnician rites, for the same reason, are shewn as they were celebrated by the people in open day. And the Persian

they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.

18 Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine

sun-worship of the sun, which was performed by the Magi, is here said to be observed by the priests alone; *five-and-twenty men, with their faces toward the east.*

*Ver. 17. For they have filled, &c.]* The last clause of this verse seems evidently misunderstood; the *therefore* in the following verse plainly pointing out that sense which the LXX, and other versions, give it. *They are these who mock me, or publicly affront me.* Those commentators, however, who defend the present version, suppose that it alludes to some custom among the idolaters, of dedicating a branch of laurel or some other tree to the sun, and carrying it in their hands at the time of their worship; a rite which was called among the Greeks *συχφορία, θαλλοφορία, &c.* See the lexicographers on those words, and Spencer de Leg. Heb. lib. iv. cap. 5.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The days seem now to have been expired, during which the prophet was to lie on his side; and a new vision is revealed to him, dated in the sixth year of Jehoiakim's captivity.

1. He sat in his house, and the elders of Judah before him. Probably it was a sabbath, and they were now assembled for the worship of God, or to consult the prophet in their present distressed circumstances: for affliction will often drive those to God's prophets, who in their prosperity despised their admonitions.

2. Then suddenly a divine extasy seized him, in the presence of the elders, and a glorious personage appeared, as fire from the loins downwards, and upwards bright and glittering: the same probably as chap. i. 26, 27. even the Lord Jesus, clothed with majesty and glory, burning with love towards his saints, and a consuming fire to his enemies.

3. The prophet is caught away in vision to Jerusalem. Swift as thought he passes through the air, and at the inner gate of the temple is let down to observe what is there transacted. This seems to have been entirely transacted in vision, and not any real or local removal of the prophet from Chaldea.

4. He records what he saw there. [1.] He beheld the same glorious vision which had appeared to him before in the plain, chap. iii. 22, 23. God had not yet deserted his temple, though he was now about to do it, provoked by their daring profaneness, impiety, and base ingratitude. [2.] He beheld the *image of jealousy* set up close by the northern gate of the inner court, where stood the altar of burnt-offering. What this image was, we are not told; the major part of the commentators, I think, consider it as the idol Baal, 2 Kings, xxi. 7. But nothing could be conceived more affronting to God; nor could they have contrived a more effectual method to provoke the eyes of his jealousy. Well, therefore, may he bid the prophet behold these abominations with wonder and detestation, and urge the justice of his departure from a people so desperately wicked! But greater abominations yet remained. *Note;*

(1.) When we set up the idols of pride, lust, and covetousness in our hearts, which should be the temples of the Holy Ghost, we become criminal like those who bowed to Baal. (2.) They who provoke God by their sins to depart from them, have only themselves to blame for the ruin which ensues.

2dly, The farther the prophet goes, the more his indignation is moved.

1. He is led to the court of the priests, and behold, a hole in the wall of one of their chambers, which he is commanded to enlarge, that he might see more distinctly what was done there; and when he had opened a passage, he came to a door, at which he is bid to enter, and observe what passed within. *Note;* (1.) They who would know the mystery of iniquity within must dig deep into the hidden corners of their hearts. (2.) Hypocrites think often to hide their iniquities; but some unguarded place betrays their wickedness, and exposes their shame. (3.) Many make a fair shew in God's house in public, who, if followed to the secret chambers, would be found sunk in abominations.

2. A scene of shocking wickedness is here laid open. *Behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts:* so immersed were they in idolatry, that even to the vilest reptiles, and the most odious and impure animals, they paid their adorations. On the walls around were portrayed all the idols of Israel; and seventy elders, the whole great sanhedrim, and in the midst of them Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, each with his censor, offered a cloud of incense to those hated deities; intimating, how entirely the whole nation was infected with idolatry, when the great men, princes and priests together, were so devoted thereunto, and so liberal in their oblations. *Note;* When they who should be examples to restrain others, are themselves ringleaders in iniquity, the corruption of a nation must needs become general.

3. God bids him observe these abominations, done indeed in the dark: but what darkness or shadow of death can hide the workers of wickedness from his all-seeing eye? And *they say, the Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth;* as if he had deserted them, would pay no regard to them in their distress, and therefore they had recourse to the gods of the nations for help. *Note;* (1.) The heart of man is naturally like these chambers of imagery; abominations pass there, which the sun would blush to behold. (2.) The day will come, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed: what a day of terror and confusion to the impenitent and unpardoned! (3.) All sin is at bottom practical atheism. (4.) They who embolden themselves in iniquity by the flattering hope that the Lord hath forsaken the earth, shall find, by the judgments that he will inflict, how near he is to vindicate his injured honour.

3dly, Farther abominations pass in review before the prophet.

1. At

CHAP. IX.

*A vision, whereby is shewed the preservation of some, and the destruction of the rest. God will not be entreated for them.*

[Before Christ 594.]

**H**E cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man *with* his destroying weapon in his hand.

2 And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them *was* clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar.

3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was,

to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which *had* the writer's inkhorn by his side;

4 And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

5 ¶ And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

6 Slay utterly old *and* young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom *is* the mark: and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which *were* before the house.

1. At the north gate of the temple sat women weeping for Tammuz; probably the Adonis of the Grecians, beloved of Venus, according to the heathen fable, and slain by a wild boar. In honour, therefore, of this goddess, they observed the anniversary of his death with mourning and tears, and dared, even in the gate of the Lord's house, to appear celebrating the shameful service.

2. In the inner court, the most sacred inclosure between the porch and the altar, where the priests ministered, there stood about five and twenty men, their backs turned to the temple, their faces to the east, adoring the rising sun.

3. God bids the prophet observe with wonder what he saw, and appeals to him concerning the aggravated guilt of this abandoned people. They made light of their dreadful provocations; and even *there*, in God's own house, performed their idolatrous rites. *They filled the land also with violence*, and then returned to provoke God to anger; for, while such wickedness was committed, their very sacrifices must needs be an abomination: and *lo, they put the branch to their nose*, some nosegay perhaps of flowers, which they held forth or smelled to in honour of their idols; or, as some read the words, *they put the branch to their wrath*, or *his wrath*, or *they are those who mock him*, adding fresh fuel to the fierceness of the divine wrath which burns against them. *Therefore will I also deal in fury*, pouring on them the vengeance due to their iniquities, and judgment without mercy; which all their prayers and tears shall not be able to avert. When sinners have turned their backs on God, it is but just for him to turn his back on them, and be deaf to their cries in the day of their calamity.

CHAP. IX.

*Ver. 1, 2. Cause them that have charge, &c.] Those who are the avengers of the city: the Chaldeans, whom God had appointed to besiege and destroy this city. Some understand it of the angels, who have the charge of executing*

God's judgments; and if so, instead of *man* and *men*, we should read *person* and *persons*. One of these was in the habit of a scribe, and employed in the work of mercy; unlike the rest, who were warriors and destroyers. They stood by the brazen altar; to denote that the men ordained to destruction were offered up as so many sacrifices. See chap. xxxix. 17.

*Ver. 2. Inkhorn]* That the easterns wore it suspended from the girdle, see Shaw's Travels, p. 293. fol. 227. 4°.

*Ver. 3. And the glory, &c.]* Meaning the glory which Ezekiel saw in the preceding chapter; that is to say, not only the chariot of glory, with the wheels and the cherubim, but also the Man sitting in the chariot; for it is the Man who speaks in this and the following verses, and who in the fourth verse is called *Jehovah*, or *the Lord*. It is observable, that *cherub* is here used in the singular for the whole divine apparatus: Houbigant renders it, *From the cherubim whereupon he sat*. In 1 Chron. xxviii. 18. the chariot of the cherubims is spoken of. This glory of God is mentioned here and in other places as going to and standing over the threshold of the house, in order, as it seems most probable, to denote that God was now about to depart from his temple. See on chap. xi. 23.

*He called]* He who sat on the throne, chap. i. 26. See chap. x. 2.: "He spake." Or, we may render it, "And *Jehovah* called to the man clothed with linen, who *had* the writer's inkhorn by his side, and said unto him, *&c.*"

*Ver. 4. Set a mark]* This expression alludes to the ancient custom of marking servants in the forehead, to distinguish what they were, and to whom they belonged. See Bishop Newton on Revel. vii. 3. The reader is to remember, that all this passed in vision, and only means that God made a distinction, and separated the good from the bad, as really as if he had marked them with some visible sign. This parabolic command, says Bishop Warburton, alludes to the sanction of the Mosaic law; and

7 And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.

8 ¶ And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?

9 Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the

city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not.

10 And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.

11 And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

implies, that virtuous individuals should be distinguished from the wicked in a general calamity.

*Ver. 7. Defile the house*] God hereby declares that he will no longer own the temple for the place of his residence, as having been polluted with idolatry; and therefore he delivers up both the inner and outer court to be polluted with blood. See chap. x. 3, 5.

*Ver. 9. Full of perverseness; for they say*] Full of oppression; because they say.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have heard the provocations of this people, and we here see that their judgment lingereth not.

1. A charge is given to the destroyers to approach; and instantly six warriors appear armed. Their business is, as ministers of wrath, to destroy the city. They come from the north, where the image of jealousy stood; from which quarter also their destruction advanced: and they went in and stood beside the brazen altar, waiting for orders, intimating that judgment would begin at the house of God; where the priests ministered, whose hand had been chief in the transgression. A seventh personage differently clad, appears among them, arrayed not as a warrior but as a priest, with a *writer's inkhorn by his side*; and this may signify the great high-priest of our profession Christ Jesus, represented here as marking down in his book, who were sincere among the multitude of his enemies. *Note*; (1.) God never wants ministers of wrath, when he has vengeance to execute against sinners. (2.) They who have profaned the altar by their wickedness, justly fall as sacrifices before it. (3.) The saints of God need not fear, whatever judgments are on the earth; their Lord and Saviour governs the whole, and will protect them from evil.

2. God's glory, the Shechinah, removes from between the cherubims to the threshold of the house, as ready now to depart from the devoted temple, when he had given the last directions to separate the few precious from the vile. And,

[1.] *He called to the man clothed with linen, &c.* God's first care is for his believing people: they were but few, yet precious in his sight. They could not behold these abominations practised by their countrymen without the bitterest concern and anguish, which they testified publicly, and lamented before God in private. On them, therefore, God commands a distinguishing mark to be

set, on the foreheads, that they might be known to belong to God, see Rev. vii. 3. in allusion to the marks on servants, or to the blood on the lintels and side-posts of the Israelites in Egypt, to guard them from the destroying angel. *Note*; (1.) God's people cannot without the deepest concern behold a world lying in wickedness; they remonstrate against the evil, and with tears before God and lament over perishing souls. (2.) They who distinguish themselves by a concern for God's glory, shall be distinguished by his care for their safety.

[2.] *To the others he said, to the six destroyers, Go ye after him, through the city, and slay with unrelenting severity both young and old, all of every age and sex, beginning at the sanctuary: the priests, who were chief in iniquity, must be the first and chief sufferers; and none must be spared, but those on whom is God's mark; these they may not touch, nor come near. No sooner is the command issued, than the destroyers obey, beginning with those ancients, the five-and-twenty, or the seventy, which were before mentioned, profaning God's temple with their idolatries. Nor need they fear to defile God's house with the blood of the slain, since they have his commission. Because these ancients have polluted it with their abominations, God will more pollute it with their dead carcases: and when they have begun their bloody work in the sanctuary, they must finish it in the city by a general massacre; and it is done.* *Note*; (1.) They who persist in their impenitence will die without mercy. (2.) None in a judgment day will meet so terrible a doom as those who, being appointed to admonish others, have seduced and destroyed the souls to whom they were ordained to minister.

2dly, We have,

1. The prophet an intercessor in behalf of this miserable people. While the execution was performing, and the prophet alone in the temple, all who were there besides being slain, he fell upon his face in great humility, and cried and said, *Ah, Lord God, wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel, in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?* he dreaded a total excision, and fain would stay the avenging arm. *Note*; A gracious soul cannot unmoved behold the miseries coming on the wicked, and fain would avert the dreadful storm by his prayers.

2. God cannot grant his request; their iniquities are such as admit of neither pardon nor reprieve: their sins are most aggravated; their land full of blood; murders the most inhuman, and every atrocious crime prevailing;

the

CHAP. X.

*The vision of the coals of fire, to be scattered over the city. The vision of the cherubims.*

[Before Christ 594.]

**T**HEN I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire-stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

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

3 Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court.

4 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD's glory.

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

6 And it came to pass, *that* when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from be-

tween the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels.

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

8 ¶ And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings.

9 And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels *was* as the colour of a beryl-stone.

10 And *as for* their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel.

11 When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went.

12 And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, *were* full of eyes round about, *even* the wheels that they four had.

13 As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel.

14 And every one had four faces: the first face *was* the face of a cherub, and the second

*the city is full of perverseness; no justice or truth is regarded; and, atheistical in principles as in practice, they blasphemously dared to deny the government of his providence, and flattered themselves with impunity in their iniquity: therefore God threatens with unsparing hand to punish them, to shut up his compassions, and to refuse to be intreated by them or for them, bringing upon them the wrath which they had so highly provoked and deserved.* Note; Though we may never cease to cry to God, there is a time when sinners are past the efficacy of prayer.

3. The man clothed with linen, &c. reports, that the divine orders were accomplished; the genuine people of God marked; the wicked destroyed. Oh, that all might learn from these awful lessons to turn to God, and walk with him in holiness of heart and life!

CHAP. X.

*Ver. 2. Even under the cherub*] Houbigant very properly reads the first verse in a parenthesis; for this evidently connects with the last of the preceding chapter. This part of the vision represented the burning of the city by the Chaldeans. The reader will observe, that the repre-

sentation of the cherubim given in chap. i. is continued throughout this vision; and the account given at the fourth verse must strike every reader, as to its similarity with the description of the Shechinah given in the books of Moses.

*Ver. 4. Then the glory*] *For the glory of the Lord had gone up.*

*Ver. 8. The form of a man's hand*] These hands of men, says Houbigant, appear to signify the human aids and counsels which God makes use of to effect the great purposes of his own divine will.

*Ver. 9. A beryl stone*] *A crysolite stone.*

*Ver. 13. As for the wheels, &c.*] *And he cried unto them in my hearing, Run.* The command is given to the four wheels in the singular number, because the motion of the four was one and the same. See Houbigant. The wheels were animated, therefore addressed; because capable of obeying the great charioteer, chap. i. 20.

————— Wheel within wheel undrawn,  
Itself instinct with spirit.

PARADISE-LOST, vi. 751.

*Ver. 14. Face of a cherub*] Or, *Face of an ox.* Houbigant

face *was* the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

15 And the cherubims were lifted up. This *is* the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.

16 And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubims lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them.

17 When they stood, *these* stood; and when they were lifted up, *these* lifted up themselves *also*: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in them.

18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims.

19 And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also *were* beside them, and *every one* stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD's house; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above.

20 This *is* the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they *were* the cherubims.

21 Every one had four faces apiece, and

gant reads the sentences in the next verse thus: *These are the same living creatures which I saw by the river Chebar; and the cherubims, &c.* ver. 16. *And when they went, the wheels, &c.*

Ver. 20. *And I knew that they were the cherubims*] This expression seems evidently to denote that these cherubims were the same with those in the temple, and that Ezekiel knew them to be such. There can be no doubt that the word *תחת* *tachat*, rendered *under*, is properly rendered. The whole representation manifestly confirms this version. Concerning the etymology of the word, we refer to Dr. Sharpe's Discourse on Cherubim, p. 397. while I have great pleasure in confirming what has been advanced on chap. i. respecting the cherubim, by the opinion of a very learned and able writer, Mr. Roques; who, speaking of the vision of Ezekiel, observes, that for the right interpretation of it, the following rules are to be laid down. The first rule is this: "An explanation which accounts for all the parts contained in the vision, is much more probable than those which explain only one part of the vision." The second is this: "An explanation which is conformable to the present circumstances of the prophet, and of the people to whom he speaks, as well as to the nature of the things which he is called upon to say to them, is incomparably more probable than those explanations, which go in quest of past or future events, which have no connection with the immediate circumstances of the prophet, nor with the end of his mission." These rules, which appear incontestable, being laid down, we observe, that their opinion who think that God here draws out a plan of the government of his providence applied to the present state of the Jews, accounts for all that Ezekiel saw, and that in a manner which refers to the end of the prophet's mission, and all that he had to say to this rebellious people. Why wish God to represent to his prophet the future state of the Christian church, which was not to be founded till after a series of time, rather than the state of the Jewish church, and the chastisements which hung over the heads of that hardened people? The people having revolted from God, and persevering obstinately in that revolt, notwithstanding the menaces of the

prophet, it was proper to shew to Ezekiel, in order that he might declare it to the rebellious, that providence had its eyes open to all that had been done, all that had hitherto happened, and that it had seized upon the rod to smite. The people imagined but too much, according to the errors of infidelity, that God saw every thing with indifference, and had given the world up to chance. It was necessary, therefore, to divest them of these fatal prejudices, and to teach them that the Supreme Being did not behold with the same eye, order and disorder, contempt of his laws and submission to his will; and that all the revolutions of states are directed by a superior intelligence, which cannot be imposed upon. The Jewish people imagined but too much, that the prophets exaggerated when they threatened them with the severest chastisements. They repeated with emphasis and complacency the promises of God made to the patriarchs; that their posterity should not only be more numerous than the stars of heaven, and the sand which covers the sea-shore; but that it should subsist for ever and ever. God had declared to Abraham, *I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee*; Gen. xvii. 7. It was proper, therefore, to shew this stiff-necked people, that the threatenings of God, and his promises, were not contradictory. That the people, as a nation, conformable to the promises given by God to the patriarchs, should not be destroyed; but that, notwithstanding, severe national judgments should be inflicted upon them, to correct them for their propensity to idolatry, and their scandalous irregularities.

These suppositions, which are reasonable, being granted, we shall have no difficulty to perceive the sense of this celebrated vision. We shall not follow the order observed by Ezekiel in the description of what he saw; he raises himself from the nearest to the most distant objects, going back from effects to their general cause. We will begin with the First Cause, which gives motion to the whole, traces out the plan, and procures the execution, according to the rules of his ineffable wisdom, and agreeable to the nature of those creatures which are the object of his agency. Next we will proceed to consider the effects of this universal providence,



every one four wings; and the likenefs of the hands of a man *was* under their wings.

22 And the likenefs of their faces *was* the

same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

providence, and the intelligent secondary causes which he frequently employs in the administration of the government of the universe.

*Ezekiel saw a firmament which was above the heads of the animals; there was the resemblance of a throne, like a sapphire stone, and over the resemblance of the throne there was as it were the resemblance of a man.* This vast transparent firmament represents to us the heaven, the peculiar residence of the Lord of the World, and where he has established the throne of his empire. This appearance of a man, was the emblem of Providence, or God, considered as taking care of all the creatures whom he hath made. Man is the symbol of intelligence. The mind of man, with respect to his knowledge and wisdom, is a weak sketch of that Mind which knows all things, and whose wisdom is unbounded. And yet of all sublunary beings there is none that approaches so near to the divine nature as man. Under this emblem also it is that God, considered as seeing all things, and directing all, would be represented. This resemblance of man was seated upon a throne, to shew that God governs all things as Lord, and that without agitation, and without labour.

The shining metal, and the fire which surrounded him who sat on the throne, were the symbols of his glory and his judgments, which are poured upon the wicked as a fire, and which nothing can withstand; agreeable to Isaiah, chap. xxxiii. 14.

The Jews acknowledged that there was a Providence which governed the whole universe with infinite wisdom. The Psalmist gives us a description of it equally just and pathetic, in Psal. civ. 27, &c. Christians no less than Jews admit this important truth; and the Gospel establishes it no less strongly than the law. See Matt. vi. 26. x. 29, 30. To raise the mind of the prophet up to the first Mover of those events which strike and astonish us in all the revolutions that happen with respect to individuals, families, and states, God shews him *four wheels* above the firmament, over which the emblem of Providence was placed on a throne. These wheels are a symbol of those perpetual revolutions which are observed in the earth, and which by turns lift up and abase individuals and nations. They are of a prodigious height; to shew that man cannot fathom or know all that is great, wonderful, and astonishing in the ways of Providence. See Job, xi. 7, 8. Isai. lv. 8, 9. Rom. xi. 33, 34. These wheels move themselves every way, and are full of eyes in the vast circle of their fellows. This shews that all which God does, he effects without pain, and that the eye of his wisdom ordereth all events in his permissive, appointing, or suffering will. The wheels did not move of themselves, but they followed the impulse of the four living creatures: *when the living creatures went, they went, &c.* This shews that in the government of the world all the creatures are subject to Providence, and that God subordinates the creatures one to another. He directs what those holy intelligences ought to do, who serve him as ministers, and are here represented by the four animals.

And these intelligences, enlightened and supported by the supreme wisdom, contribute, as far as is suitable, to all that happens to mankind. The angels, whom Ezekiel saw, were in number four; with reference to the four cardinal points of the world; to shew that their ministry extends every where, and that there is no part of the universe which the providence of God does not govern either in an immediate manner, or by the means of his ministers. The extraordinary shape of these angels, which appeared to the prophet in vision, is symbolical; for it is not to be supposed, that those heavenly ministers are really thus formed. The *four faces, wings, and arms of a man*, denote the sublime qualities of these immediate ministers of the Deity; qualities entirely essential to fill up the extent of their duty. The face of a man denotes their intelligence, of a lion their intrepid courage, of an ox their patience and perseverance in labour; and of an eagle their great penetration, their sublime flight into heavenly things, and their readiness to rise up towards all that is great and divine. The wings being stretched out, signify that they are always ready to set forward and run with rapidity wherever the commands of their great Master call them. The wings bent down, are a symbol of that profound respect in which these heavenly ministers stand before the Lord of the Universe. Under the wings there were men's arms, to shew that zeal produces application and labour. Labour without zeal can never be supported; and zeal without application, is only a hypocritical ardour which amounts to nothing with that Supreme Master, who requires sincere homage from those who serve him. If God chose to make known to Ezekiel that his providence extends to all things, and that even in this life it often takes up the rod to chastise nations and individuals; he would also shew beforehand, that he willed not the destruction of the Jewish people, whom he was about to visit in his anger, but only its correction and amendment. This is signified by the *precious metal*, which the prophet found unmelted in the midst of the fiery cloud. This cloud of fire, urged on by a whirlwind, and involving on all sides the metal, represented the judgments of God, which were about to fall upon this rebellious people, not to destroy them as a nation, but to humble and purify them. Nothing is more proper than afflictions to bring men through grace back to their duty. As fire purifies metals, so the paternal chastisements of God purify the soul and heart, if the man be not entirely incorrigible. The people upon whom God was about to pour the vials of his anger, were not worthy of his lenity. But that great God who is firm in his promises, remembers the covenant of peace which he had made with the patriarchs. This covenant is made sensible to the prophet under the image of the rainbow, which was round about him who appeared upon the throne. Every one knows that this splendid phenomenon, which seems to join heaven and earth together, was given to Noah and his posterity, as a symbol of the covenant which God then made with mankind, and by which he declared to them, that the earth should undergo a deluge no more.

And

## C H A P. XI.

*The presumption of the princes: their sin and judgment. Ezekiel complaining, God sheweth him his purpose in restoring a penitent remnant, and punishing the wicked. The glory of God leaveth the city. Ezekiel is returned to the captivity.*

[Before Christ 594.]

**M**OREOVER the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the LORD's house, which looketh eastward:

and behold, at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

2 Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city:

3 Which say, *It is not near; let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh.*

And thus the pagans considered the *Iris* as the messenger of the deities. See Virg. *Æn.* lib. v. ver. 604. But whereas the rainbow to the Jews was a symbol of peace, the *Iris* of the Pagans was a messenger of trouble. On the sight of this bow, the symbol of grace, Ezekiel was to be encouraged, and persuaded that his people were not threatened with an utter destruction. The event fully justified all that the prophet had contemplated with surprize in this enigmatical picture. The Chaldeans, the rod of the Lord's just severity, ravaged Judæa: the people were carried away captive: they groaned for seventy years in a foreign land: but they were protected in a miraculous manner against the bloody designs of a cruel Haman: and, at length, favoured with various decrees of the kings of Persia, they had permission, not only to return to their own country, but also to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, as we shall see hereafter in our notes on chap. xxxvii.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here a glorious appearance of the Divine Majesty, like that which the prophet saw, chap. i.

A throne of dazzling brightness is set in the firmament above the cherubim, and God's attendant ministers stand ranged on the right side of the house, as expressive of their abhorrence of the image of jealousy which stood on the left.

1. God departs from his holy place, *from the cherub, where the Shechinah, the symbol of the divine presence, rested, and stood over the threshold of the house, as ready to depart; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory, see 1 Kings, viii. 11.* The temple was in darkness, an emblem of the blindness of the Jews; and the court of the Gentiles illuminated, God having resolved to send to these the light of his Gospel. *And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard even to the outer court, loud as the voice of mighty thunders; intimating their departure thence, or signifying the glorious voice of Gospel-grace, which by the preaching of the apostles should sound forth to the most distant nations.*

2. The city of Jerusalem is doomed to be burnt with fire, signified by the command to the man clad in linen, &c. to go in between the wheels under the cherub, and take thence burning coals, and scatter them on the city; and he immediately went in, when one of the cherubs took off the coals, chap. i. 13. and put them in his hand, and he went forth straight to execute his commission; which intimates, (1.) That the wrath of God against sin is most

holy: it is fire *from between the cherubims.* (2.) The Lord Jesus hath all judgment committed to him; and at his second coming to judge the world, shall burn up the earth, as then Jerusalem, with fire. (3.) The great quarrel of God against Jerusalem was especially their persecution of those ministers whom the cherubim represented.

2dly, The particulars here recorded of this glorious vision were before observed, chap. i. and with very little variation, except that the face of an ox, there, is here called, the face of a cherub, which seems to intimate that they were the same.

They who interpret the cherubim of the angels, and the wheels of the Divine Providence, observe,

1. That this world, like these wheels, is in a state of constant revolution; and though the dispensations of providence appear sometimes intricate, as wheel within wheel, they all exactly correspond, and tend to one great end, the glory of God.

2. Nothing can interrupt the counsels and will of God: whatever difficulties are in the way, the wheels go forward, and every obstruction is borne down, or removed.

3. The angels are the ministering spirits, whose service God is pleased to employ in his providential government of the world.

The design of repeating this transcendently magnificent appearance here, seems to be in order to upbraid their wickedness and folly, who provoked this glorious God to depart from them, as he was now about to do. He departs from the threshold, ascends his cherubic chariot, and upwards they mount, removing first to the outer gate of the Lord's house, then to a mountain on the east, chap. xi. 23. and at last he utterly abandons the land. Thus God at first caused his word to be preached to the Jews; and when they rejected his Gospel, he departed from them, and sent his ministers far off to the Gentiles.

## C H A P. XI.

*Ver. 1. Five and twenty men]* The same who are represented in chap. viii. 16. as worshipping the sun. They were *princes of the people*; that is to say, most probably members of the great Sanhedrim. Compare Jer. xxvi. 10.

*Ver. 3. This city is the caldron]* *When they say, that doth not yet hang over, or threaten us, that our houses should be the caldron, and we the flesh.* Jeremiah, as well as Ezekiel himself, foretold the destruction of Jerusalem under the metaphor of a *seething-pot*. See chap. xxiv. and Jer. i. 13; an idea which these infidels seem here to ridicule.

*Ver.*

4 ¶ Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man.

5 And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, *every one of them.*

6 Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain.

7 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they *are* the flesh, and this *city is* the caldron: but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it.

8 Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord GOD.

9 And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you.

10 Ye shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

11 This *city* shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; *but* I will judge you in the border of Israel:

12 And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that *are* round about you.

13 ¶ And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?

14 ¶ Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

15 Son of man, thy brethren, *even* thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, *are* they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get ye far from the LORD; unto us is this land given in possession.

16 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

18 And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence.

19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

20 That they may walk in my statutes,

*Ver. 6, 7. Ye have multiplied your slain] Ye have multiplied your soldiers in this city, you have filled the streets thereof; ver. 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, The soldiers whom ye have placed in the midst of you shall be the flesh, and this city the caldron: But I will cast you forth, &c. as a boiling caldron casts forth the flesh.* God adds in the 10th and 11th verses, *I will judge you in the borders*, that is to say, after I have cast you out of the boiling caldron. This respects Zedekiah more particularly, his sons and relations, upon whom Nebuchadnezzar exercised judgment at Riblah, in the borders of Judæa. See Jer. li. 4, 47, 49. Houbigant and Kennicott.

*Ver. 12. The Lord: For, &c.] The Lord; because ye have not walked, &c.*

*Ver. 13. Pelatiah—died] He fell down dead before the prophet, struck with the menaces of the Lord, as with a blast of lightning. Though this passed in vision, it is probable that Pelatiah really died at Jerusalem, while Eze-*  
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kiel was carried thither in spirit; and though the prophet was in Mesopotamia, it was easy for him to know the fact itself by the frequent commerce which was between Judæa and the provinces beyond the Euphrates. See Calmet.

*Ver. 15, 16. Son of man, &c.] Son of man, thy brethren, the men who are captives with thee, and all the house of Israel; all those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem say, They are vanished far from the Lord; the land is given to us in possession. Ver. 16. Thou shalt say these things concerning them; Thus, &c.* Houbigant; who, instead of, *As a little sanctuary*, reads, *A sanctuary in a little time.* He would be to them of the captivity what he had formerly been to the whole nation; their refuge and defence.

*Ver. 19. And I will give them one heart] These are the same evangelical promises as we read in the other prophets; particularly Jeremiah, xxxii. 39. The insensibility of men with regard to religious matters is often ascribed to the hardness of their hearts. God promises here to give them*

and keep mine ordinances, and do them : and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

21 But *as for them* whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own head, saith the Lord God.

22 ¶ Then did the cherubims lift up their

wings, and the wheels besides them ; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above.

23 And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which *is* on the east side of the city.

24 ¶ Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God

teachable dispositions, and to *take away the veil from their hearts*, as St. Paul expresses it, 2 Cor. iii. 16. the same temper being indifferently expressed either by *blindness* or *hardness of heart*. See Lowth.

Ver. 21. *But as for them, &c.*] *But whoever turn their hearts to idols and detestable things, I, &c.*

Ver. 23. *And the glory of the Lord went up*] The Lord did not quit Jerusalem all at once ; he left it by little and little. He forsook the temple before he stopped at the threshold of the city ; at length he elevated himself upon the mount of Olives, which was to the east, and in view of Jerusalem, as it were to give them time to consider and repent. This was not only a figure of what was to happen at Jerusalem from the Chaldeans, but of the evils which were to attend them after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This divine Saviour, after having exhausted his patience in instructing, correcting, and threatening Jerusalem, at length forsook it, and ascended to heaven from this same mount of Olives in the presence of his apostles and disciples. See Calmet.

Ver. 24. *So the vision—went up from me*] The prophet recovered from his ecstasy, and related all that which we have considered from the beginning of the 8th chapter to this place.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The abominations which were done in the temple we have seen ; and as great, it seems, prevailed in the courts of justice as in the worship of the sanctuary.

1. Under the Spirit's conduct the prophet is led to the east gate of the Lord's house, where five and twenty of the princes sat, two of whom are mentioned by name ; and these, though the same in number as those chap. viii. 16. are different ; those being priests between the porch and the altar ; these judges or princes, sitting in council, or presiding in the courts of judicature, where they were chargeable with great abuses. They were abettors of wickedness : *these are the men that devise mischief, or vanity* ; contrived schemes for the defence of the city, and encouraged the people to rebel in defiance of God's threatenings : *and give wicked counsel in this city* ; advising the persecution of the prophets, and promising their countrymen all success and security in their evil ways ; denying the truth of God's warnings, and impiously declaring, *It is not near* ; there was no danger from the Chaldean army ; but that they may *safely build houses, and dwell in them peaceably* ; for *this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh* ; ridiculing what the prophet Jeremiah had spoken, chap. i. 13. or intimating, that no enemy would dare approach them, any more than

a person would take with his hands the flesh out of a boiling caldron. *Note* ; (1.) The higher men are in office, the more criminal is their unfaithfulness. (2.) Wicked counsellors hurry a deluded people to the precipice of ruin. (3.) They who put far from them the evil day, will find it terribly surprize them ere they are aware. (4.) Mockery at God's word will shortly end in misery.

2. He is commanded, and strengthened by the Spirit of the Lord, to deliver with fidelity God's warnings to these wicked rulers. *Prophecy against them, prophecy, O son of man* : with boldness and zeal ; for the greatest are not too high or above divine rebuke : nor can we do a greater act of kindness to sinners who are flattering themselves to their ruin, than to undeceive them, and shew them the guilt and danger of their state. *And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak* ; enabling him to open his mouth with undaunted courage, and not to fear the faces of the many or the mighty. He must tell them,

[1.] That God is privy to their devices. However secret their contrivances, or deep laid their schemes, he searcheth the heart, and nothing is hid from his all-seeing eye.

[2.] *Ye have multiplied your slain in this city* ; by many inhuman murders, by the death of innocents, and the prophets of the Lord : and at their door lay all the blood which should be shed during the siege. In a sense that they little suspected, that city should be the caldron, and these dead corpses the flesh, the only inhabitants who should remain in it, buried under the ruins.

[3.] God will carry the survivors into captivity. Far from dwelling as they flattered themselves there, safe as flesh in a caldron, the Lord will drag them forth, and deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans. *Note* ; Every sinner is a self-deceiver : he cries peace to his soul, but it will shortly be found that there is a lie in his right hand.

[4.] By the sword they shall fall ; not merely as warriors fighting during the siege, but as criminals brought to the bar of the king of Babylon, seized and bound : in Riblah, in *the border of Israel*, shall judgment pass on them, and they miserably perish under the hand of the executioner, Jer. lii. 9, 10.

[5.] God will terribly make himself known to them by the judgments that he executes. They would not acknowledge him as their Lord by obedience to his holy will, but cast off his government, and copied the manners of the heathen around them ; therefore in the sufferings that he will inflict, they shall know him to be a jealous God, and prove the truth of his threatenings, the power of his wrath, and the severity of his justice.

into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me.

25 Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the LORD had shewed me.

3. An alarming providence confirms this awful warning. Pelatiah, the son of Benaiah, one of the five and twenty whom he saw at the gate, dropped down dead as he uttered these words; an earnest of the fulfilment of this fearful prophesy. This seems to have been done in vision here, but no doubt happened at this very time, or when this prophesy was published. *Note*; God is pleased to make some present monuments of his judgments, when sudden death arrests the daring sinner in the midst of his profaneness and impiety.

4. The prophet, affected by this fearful stroke, deprecates the vengeance that he saw ready to fall on the remnant of Israel. Though he denounced their doom, he did not desire the dreadful day, but wept, and prayed, and intreated, if so be the wrath might yet pass away.

adly, We have,

1. The insults cast on the poor captives in Babylon by their proud brethren, who still continued in their own land. *They said, Get ye far from the Lord*; suggesting, that as sinners above the rest they deserved to be cut from the communion of the true Israelites, and to lose all their interest in the inheritance of the Lord, as forfeited; for *unto us is this land given in possession*. The prophet, therefore, need not be affected for the destruction that he saw coming on those who thus treated his brethren, the men of his kindred, or the men who were captives with him; and these in God's account, though slighted and trampled upon, are *all the house of Israel wholly, the good figs*, who for their benefit were sent into Babylon; while their revilers were the *evil figs*, to whom God disowned any relation. *Note*; They are often the severest censurers of others, whose own conduct will least bear examination.

2. The comfortable words that the prophet is commanded to speak to them. God hath the most gracious designs towards them; and when their revilers are ruined, they shall be redeemed and saved.

[1.] Though they want the temple, God will himself by his presence and love be a *little sanctuary* unto them; and though he has indeed dispersed them in the land of the heathen, where their condition seemed to be desperate; yet there he would visit them, and make them as safe as under the horns of the altar, and happy in communion with him, as if they were in the courts of the Lord's house; or a *sanctuary of a few*, the little remnant brought into captivity; or, for a little while, during the seventy years' captivity. *Note*; (1.) Whatever outward means of grace we are excluded from, God can abundantly make them up in divine communications. (2.) The way to the throne of God is in every place alike open; and we may assuredly find him near, whenever in fervent prayer we seek his face.

[2.] God promises to bring them again to their own land, to collect them from their dispersion, and restore them to the possession of their lost inheritance, when the present occupants should utterly be consumed.

[3.] They shall not only be restored to their land, but, what is infinitely better, recovered from their backslidings, and renewed in the spirit of their minds. Their former detestable idolatries shall be wholly rooted out from among

them; and the Lord in his rich grace assures them, that he will give them one heart, single in its attachment to him and his worship, and faithfully devoted to his glory; and put a new spirit within them, giving them new affections, new desires, new purposes, new delights, new principles, new ends; that God may be glorified in them and by them. And he will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, the corrupt, hard, impenitent heart that had before been stubborn and obstinate against God's word and warnings; and will give them an heart of flesh; tender, susceptible of the deepest impressions of shame and remorse for former unfaithfulness, and of love to God for his boundless mercies, now seen and felt with the most lively sensibility. Thus they shall be enabled for the practice of that obedience which God enjoins, and in this way enjoy the comfort of that most blessed and endeared relation, *God their God, and they his people*. And what is here spoken of them is true of all God's faithful people, whose hearts by nature are hard and stupid, but by the powerful energy of his Spirit are softened, and effectually converted to God, the whole man renewed after the image of Jesus, and the love of sin, of every idol, mortified within them. Where such a blessed change is wrought, it is the sure evidence of our relation to God, and a blessed earnest of our return to the heavenly Canaan; while without it to hope for heaven would be the greatest delusion: there must be a meetness for it, ere we can truly expect an entrance into the inheritance among the saints in light.

3. A denunciation of wrath is pronounced on those who still dwelt in Jerusalem, and lived in their abominable idolatries: God will visit them according to their deeds. By famine, pestilence, and the sword, they shall miserably perish. *Note*; If the heart continue apostate from God, hell must be the sinner's doom.

3dly, The message being delivered to the prophet,

1. God departs, and abandons the city and temple to destruction. He went up in his cherubic chariot, and stood upon the mountain at the east of the city, supposed to be the mount of Olives; either looking back with grief on those devoted walls, as in the days of his flesh he there wept over Jerusalem; or on that mount which had been the seat of idolatry and corruption, 2 Kings, xxiii. 13. triumphing in the view of the destruction that he was about to bring on the city. *Note*; Vengeance is God's strange work: he appears loath to strike; but when his abused patience is at an end, and the measure of the sinner's iniquity is full, God will shew approbation of his torment.

2. The prophet is by the Spirit re-conveyed in vision to Chaldea, and thereupon the divine glory went up from him, and disappeared. He awaked from his ecstacy, and found himself in his own house among the captivity, and probably the elders of Judah still before him. *Note*; The faints of God, if at times favoured with some extraordinary and ecstatic views of the divine glory, may expect them here below to be of no long continuance; but it is reserved for the faithful as the happiness of the glorious world above, there to enjoy without abatement the full beatific vision

## C H A P. XII.

*The type of Ezekiel's removing sheweth the captivity of Zedekiah. Ezekiel's trembling sheweth the Jews' desolation. The Jews' presumptuous proverb is reproved. The speediness of the vision.*

[Before Christ 594.]

**T**HE word of the LORD also came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they *are* a rebellious house.

3 Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they *be* a rebellious house.

4 Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity.

5 Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby.

6 In their sight shalt thou bear *it* upon *thy* shoulders, and carry *it* forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee *for* a sign unto the house of Israel.

7 And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought *it* forth in the twilight, and I bare *it* upon *my* shoulder in their sight.

8 And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying,

9 Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou?

10 Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; This burden *concerneth* the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that *are* among them.

of God. In the mean time, it is their privilege here below to enjoy constant peace and constant serene joy.

3. He immediately communicated to those of the captivity all the things that he had seen and heard, as an encouragement to the poor captives to be thankful for their lot; and most probably notice was conveyed also to Jerusalem of the judgments threatened, as a warning, which, if it led them not to return from their sins, might leave them inexcusable in their impenitence.

## C H A P. XII.

*Ver. 1. The word of the Lord also came, &c.]* This happened in the sixth year of Zedekiah, and five years before the siege of Jerusalem. The prophecies in the following chapters to the 20th are of the same year. The prophet here applies himself to those of the captivity among whom he dwelt: they saw Jerusalem still inhabited, and under the government of its own king; so that they who were left in the land of Canaan, insulted the exiles, who repined at their own situation; thinking those who dwelt at Jerusalem in a much better condition than themselves. The following parables, therefore, are designed to shew, that they who were left behind to sustain the miseries of a siege and the insults of a conqueror, would be in a much worse situation, than those who were already settled in a foreign land. See Lowth and Calmet. Houbigant, however, is of a different opinion, and thinks that this prophecy was delivered while Ezekiel dwelt in Jerusalem, before he was carried captive to Babylon.

*Ver. 3. Prepare thee stuff for removing]* See the note on chap. iv. 1. This command is merely an information by action, instead of words, foretelling the approaching captivity of Zedekiah. Dr. Waterland observes, that he sees

no reason for thinking that the prophet might not really perform all here related, and more, without difficulty, or forfeiting either his discretion or gravity. The manner and circumstances of the whole narrative, as it stands in the prophet, being very different from what we meet with in several others, pleads strongly for the strict and literal interpretation. It is no less than *seven times* repeated, that the prophet was to do, or did this *in the sight of the people*; and he did it in the evening, in the twilight, and in the morning, after God came to ask him whether the house of Israel had taken notice of such his uncommon behaviour, and had inquired what it meant. These and other circumstances appear to be very cogent proofs of *real facts*, and that it is more than a narrative of a vision, or recital of a parable. And, therefore, I cannot but think that it is going much too far from strict rule, to reject the *literal* sense here, though I know that a very pious and learned writer has done it, and that he had some appearance of *reason*, besides the authority of some Jewish interpreters to countenance him in it. See his Script. Vind. part iii. p. 97. and Smith's Select Discourses, p. 228.

*Stuff]* Instruments, furniture, goods; whatever is fitting for a particular purpose; as here, for a long journey.

*Ver. 6. I have set thee for a sign]* That is, "as a man whose ways, words, and actions, shall be signs and figures to them of what is to happen: all in your person shall be significative and prophetical."

*Ver. 9. Son of man, &c.]* Son of man, the house of Israel, this rebellious house, hath thus inquired of thee, What is this that thou doest? Houbigant; who, instead of *the prince in Jerusalem*, in the next verse, reads, *the prince, and Jerusalem.*

*Ver.*

11 Say, I *am* your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove *and* go into captivity.

12 And the prince that *is* among them shall bear upon *his* shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with *his* eyes.

13 My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon *to* the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

14 And I will scatter toward every wind all that *are* about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them.

15 And they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.

16 But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

17 ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

18 Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness;

19 And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *and* of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.

20 And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

21 ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

22 Son of man, what *is* that proverb *that* ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?

23 Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.

*Ver. 12. Shall bear upon his shoulder} Shall be carried upon shoulders, &c. They shall dig through the wall, and he shall go out thereby. Houbigant. Or rather, He shall dig. 6. Ar. Syr. For the fact, see Jer. xxxix. 4. lii. 7. 2 Kings, xxv. 4. It is probable, that the king and his companions fled through a breach made by themselves in the wall. Or, as Michaelis suggests, the gate through which they fled may have been walled up during the siege.*

*Ver. 13. My net also} " Though Zedekiah flatters himself with escaping the Chaldean army, yet he shall find himself fatally mistaken; for I will bring his enemies upon him, who shall encompass him, and stop his flight, as when a wild beast is entangled in a net." See Jer. xxxvii. xxxviii. and lii. 10, 11.*

*Ver. 21—23. And the word, &c.] The latter part of the 22d verse is spoken in the person of infidels, who turn the grace of God into wantonness, taking encouragement from his patience and long-suffering to despise his threatenings, as if they never would be fulfilled; and to deride his prophets, as if they had prophesied in vain. Both parts of this objection are obviated in the 23d and 24th verses. See Waterland's Script. Vind. p. 98. Houbigant reads the clause in the 22d verse in the future.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though many among the captives in Babylon profited under the visitation, yet multitudes were still hardened; flattered by their false prophets with

hopes of a speedy return to Jerusalem; and deaf to the admonitions of God's messengers, warning them to repent of their sins, and patiently submit to his will in bearing their appointed seventy years' captivity. They were a rebellious house, and would not see nor hear; and who so blind as those? To affect them therefore, not only by warnings but by the most expressive signs of the certain and terrible destruction of Jerusalem, the prophet is enjoined,

1. To prepare his stuff for removing, *his vessels of captivity*, as if going into a far country; and this openly in the sight of the people, *removing from place to place* as one unsettled, and seeking an abode: in the twilight he must dig through the wall of his house, and *carry out thereby* his stuff, bearing it upon his own shoulders in a mournful habit, and with a dejected look, as one going into captivity; covering his face, and stealing off in the dark as one ashamed and afraid of discovery. Thus he must be a sign to that rebellious house. *It may be they will consider*, and, though not moved with what they heard, be affected with what they saw, *though they be a rebellious house.* God thus tries every method with sinners; and ministers must not despair of repeating their labours with the most hardened and obstinate: *it may be* they will repent: and the most distant hope should encourage our perseverance in our work.

2. The prophet instantly obeys, however laborious the work,



24 For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.

25 For I *am* the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD.

26 ¶ Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

27 Son of man, behold, *they* of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth *is* for many days *to come*, and he prophesieth of the times *that are* far off.

28 Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more; but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD.

work, or strange it might appear. They who have God's commands must never hesitate. We must be ready to do or suffer any thing for his glory and the good of men's souls; and count all our worldly stuff not worth a thought, if he call us at any time to remove, knowing that we have in heaven a better and more abiding substance.

3. The Lord the next morning gives the prophet the explication of what he had enjoined, which he is to communicate to the people, who would naturally be inquisitive what he meant by this conduct: or perhaps they ridiculed him at his work, and, bantering, cried, *What doest thou?* What is this strange fellow about? He must tell them, that *this burden* of the prophetic word respected the prince Zedekiah and all the house of Israel: Ezekiel is their sign herein; as he hath done, so shall they. Their king, in whom they trusted, and by whose influence they hoped to be set at liberty and restored to their own country, so far from helping them, should be enslaved himself, and follow them to Babylon. Pressed by the besiegers, and the city no longer tenable, he shall attempt to escape by night, breaking through the wall of the city for privacy, and carrying a bundle of his most valuable effects or provision with him; his face covered with shame at his miserable plight, or with a mask to prevent his being known; but vain the attempt; God's net, the Chaldean army, should be spread over him, and he taken as a bird in a snare, led captive into Babylon, and die there; yet doomed never to see the place, his eyes being put out by the conqueror, in just punishment of his perfidy, Jer. xxxix. 7. His guards scattered, his forces fled, yet pursued by the sword, few shall be suffered to escape, and these dispersed in heathen lands; living monuments of divine vengeance; or perhaps there brought to repentance, acknowledging their abominations, and justifying God in his judgments. Thus, says he, *they shall know that I am the Lord*, omniscient, just, and almighty. *Note;* God will make himself known, either in the terrors of his wrath to the impenitent, or in the riches of his grace to the humble.

2dly, Ezekiel is again a sign unto them.

He must *eat his bread with quaking, and drink his water with trembling and with carefulness*; as if he was in danger of want, or expected that it would be snatched from him; intimating the distress to which the inhabitants of Jerusalem should be reduced during the siege, terrified by their enemies without, dreading the ravages of famine within, and expecting shortly that both their bread and

water would fail, and they miserably perish for want; the land being doomed to desolation universal, the cities wasted, the country ravaged, uncultivated, and destitute of man and beast; and this because of the *violence therein*, the bloodshed, oppression, and injustice exercised among them. And these judgments would teach them that knowledge of God, or that consciousness of his glory and power, which in their prosperity they refused to learn. *Note;* (1.) They who abuse *fulness of bread*, are justly punished with pining want. (2.) Those afflictions, on ourselves or others, are singular blessings to us, which lead us to a deeper knowledge of and acquaintance with God.

3dly, The awful warnings which the prophet gave, were too plain to be mistaken, and the signs too forcible not to make some impression. But we are told what methods they took to evade the conviction. They affirmed, that the time for threatened judgments was prolonged, and would not yet arrive; so that they might hope for peace in their days, and that the prophetic vision looked forward to some very distant season; so that they need not disturb themselves about the event: nay, some dared assert that the evil never would come, *every vision faileth or perisheth*; so apt are sinners to abuse God's patience, to harden their hearts because judgment is not speedily executed, and to flatter themselves that the terrors of God are mere bugbears. Nor did the false prophets fail to encourage the delusion, so that the sayings were industriously propagated, and became proverbial: by frequent repetitions they began to believe their own lie. Against this deceit the prophet sets his face, and from God assures them, that their neglect of his judgments shall but hasten them.

1. God will silence their false hopes, by bringing on them the threatened punishment, when every vision should take effect, their lying prophets be abashed, and their delusive proverbs confounded. *Note;* They who will not believe the warnings of God, will too late be terribly convinced by the infliction of his judgments.

2. God will do this certainly and suddenly. *I am the Lord*, whose truth is inviolable, his power almighty, his justice most sacred; and who will execute all his threatenings. Since he hath spoken, it shall be done. No longer respite shall be granted, but wrath to the uttermost come on the rebellious house of Israel, and that quickly; *the days are at hand, even in your days*, their eyes shall see the destruction; within five or six years the whole should be accomplished. And the same assurance is repeated to cut off all doubt of the event, since heaven and earth shall sooner pass away than one jot or tittle fail of God's word. *Note;* It

## C H A P. XIII.

*The reproof of lying prophets, and their untempered mortar.  
Of prophetesses and their pillows.*

[Before Christ 594.]

**A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

4 O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.

6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.

7 Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not

spoken?

8 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD.

9 And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

10 Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and *there was* no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar:

11 Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it.

12 Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where *is* the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?

13 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower

is the folly of sinners, when they hear of death and judgment, to put far from them the evil day, and defer the great work of preparing for eternity to a more convenient season: when, lo! their hour arrives; they bow, they fall, the grave receives them; a warning to others of the madness of procrastination, and a loud call to-day, while it is called to-day, to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

## C H A P. XIII.

*Ver. 3. And have seen nothing*] Who give their own imaginations for true prophecies, and pretend to have visions, when they never had any.

*Ver. 4. Like the foxes in the deserts*] Or, as the apostle styles them, 2 Cor. xi. 13. *deceitful workers*, who craftily insinuate false doctrines into unstable minds, and at the same time are hungry and ravenous, greedily catching at the least appearance of advantage. Houbigant renders it, *like the foxes in the walls*; for it is usual with these animals in Palestine, we are told, to frequent ruinous walls and places of that sort, in search of the lesser animals for their prey. The next verse seems to allude hereto. Houbigant renders it, *You do not ascend the ruins to strengthen the wall for the house of Israel, nor to stand*, &c. but merely, like hungry and insidious foxes, to feed yourselves from the vain credulity of the people. Others, however, understand the phrase of

*standing in the gap*, as allusive to the intercession made by Moses for the Israelites; whereby he withheld, as it were, the hand of the Almighty, when it was stretched out to take vengeance on the people in the wilderness. In the 5th verse we may read, *You have not stood in the breach, nor repaired the fence*, &c.

*Ver. 9. They shall not be in the assembly, &c.*] *They shall not be in the secret of my people*; which is explained by the following words, *Neither shall they enter into the land of Israel*. The secret of God was, his purpose to bring back the exiles of Israel into their own land.

*Ver. 10. And one built up a wall*] “The false prophets have deceived my people, by telling them that none of those judgments should overtake them which Jeremiah and the other prophets had foretold; and instead of providing such a defence and bulwark as might secure the people against the judgment threatened them, they raised only a slight fence, without any cement to strengthen it; that is to say, they applied slight and paliating remedies to public calamities, which will never give true peace to the consciences of men, nor be of any service to them.” The apostrophe to the *hailstones*, in the next verse, is noble and sublime.

*Ver. 13. I will even rend it, &c.*] The Chaldee paraphrast expounds this passage in the following manner, as prophetic of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army:

in mine anger, and great hailstones in *my* fury to consume it.

14 So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered *mortar*, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall: and ye shall be consumed, in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

15 Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered *mortar*, and will say unto you, The wall *is* no *more*, neither they that daubed it;

16 *To wit*, the prophets of Israel which

prophecy concerning Jerufalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and *there is* no peace, saith the Lord GOD.

17 ¶ Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophecy out of their own heart; and prophecy thou against them;

18 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the *women* that sew pillows to all arm-holes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive *that come* unto you?

19 And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of

army: "I will bring a mighty king, with the force of a " whirlwind, a destroying people resembling an over- " flowing storm, and powerful princes like great hail- " stones."

Ver. 17, 18. *Likewise, thou son of man*] The prophet is here ordered to direct his discourse against the female pretenders to prophecy, as had been done in the former part of the chapter against the male. There seems no doubt that the expressions in the 18th verse allude to certain magical ceremonies which were made use of in their incantations, by these female pretenders to prophecy: but no commentator has yet been able to ascertain their precise meaning; nor do I think it possible without farther light than the text affords. See 1 Sam. xxviii. 7, 8. It is thought by some, that the prophet speaks metaphorically of those, who, by their seducing words, taught men to rest securely in their evil ways, and indulged them in softness and effeminacy. See Houbigant, Calmet, and Pilkington's Remarks, p. 117.

Ver. 18. *To all arm-holes*] See Jer. xxxviii. 12. This may be figurative language, designed to express that men were taught to recline at ease on their couches, and to partake of banquets. See what Harmer says concerning the eastern mode of sitting supported by pillows, ii. 98. Carpets, mattresses, and cushions are the furniture of divans. Russell's Hist. of Aleppo, 4to, 101. Sir John Chardin also mentions a mattress with large cushions placed at the back and sides of the person, who uses it as a bed. Harmer, ii. 123. See also Shaw's Travels, 209, 4to; who says that several velvet or damask bolsters were placed on the carpets or mattresses in Barbary.

*To hunt souls*] To destroy men, to expose them to God's vengeance by lulling them into security. See Prov. vi. 26. *שפן* *nepesh* signifies a *person*, or *life*, as well as *soul*.

This may be a strong eastern manner of expressing that these women *hoodwinked* their votaries, and kept them in spiritual darkness.

Or the covering of the head may have been of the ornamental or triumphal kind, to denote prosperity or victory; as pillows denoted tranquillity and plenty: and both may have been significantly applied to the heads and arms of

those who consulted the prophetesses. "The prophetesses " may be represented as covering the heads of those whom " they by their prophesying destined to death; as the head " of Haman was covered when he was really in those " circumstances.

"I am nevertheless disposed to understand the clause " in a different sense. These prophetesses did the same " thing by their flattering *words* as would have been best " expressed if they had thought fit to signify the same " thing by *actions* only, (as the prophets sometimes did,) " by making bolsters for the arms, and presenting them to " the Israelitish women whom they wanted to assure of " the continuance of their prosperity; and embroidering " handkerchiefs proper to bind over the ornaments of fe- " males in a state of honour, and afterwards putting them " on their heads." Harmer, ii. 98.

Perhaps incantations were used. See Chald. on ver. 20.: and we learn from 1 Sam. xxviii. 7. and from the Greek and Roman writers, that women employed themselves in magical rites. It is not impossible that *every stature* may refer to images of different sizes:

*Lanea et effigies erat, altera cerea: major  
Lanea, que penis compeferet inferiorem.*

HOR. Sat. lib. I. viii. 30, 31.

Of wool and wax the forms were wrought;  
The woollen was erect and tall,  
And scourg'd the waxen image small.

FRANCIS.

*Terna tibi hæc primum triplici diversa colore  
Jicia circumdo, terque hæc altaria circum  
Effigiem duco.*

VIRG. Ecl. viii. 73, &c.

Around his waxen image first I wind  
Three woollen fillets, of three colours join'd;  
Thrice bind about his thrice-devoted head,  
Which round the sacred altar thrice is led.

DRYDEN.

The easterns had, and still have, frequent amulets and ribands of charms, which they put principally at their hands and heads. Such charms these female prophets fabricated; and, as appears, attributed to them the power of preserving the life of those who wore them, and of bringing death on their enemies.

Ver. 19. *And for pieces of bread*] See Jer. xxxvii. 21.

REFLEC-

bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies?

20 Wherefore, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I *am* against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make *them* fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, *even* the souls that ye hunt to make *them* fly.

21 Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they

shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

22 Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:

23 Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The false prophets abounded, both in Judæa and among the captives in Babylon; and by their flattering speeches the hearts of the unwary people were beguiled: against them therefore the prophet is ordered to direct his word. They are called *the prophets of Israel*: probably they arrogated that title to themselves, and persecuted the few faithful prophets because they remonstrated against and contradicted their falsehood and lies.

1. A heavy charge is laid against them. They were daring impostors, pretended a mission and instruction from God, when he never sent them, forging visions which they never saw, the mere contrivances of their own brain: instead of being guided by the Spirit of truth, they followed their own deceived hearts; and dared to advance, as the dictates of inspiration, that which they knew to be a lie: crafty and ravenous as the foxes of the desert, they preyed on the deluded people; yet, wise as they accounted themselves in their deceits, they were in fact *foolish prophets*, sunk in spiritual ignorance and sin; they used no efforts to prevent the impending judgments, nor ever stood up in the breach against the overflowings of ungodliness, with sharp and faithful rebukes against the wicked, or fervent and importunate prayer to God, in order to avert his wrath when he arose as an enemy against them. Nay, they widened the gap which they should have made up, by basely betraying men's souls, flattering them to their ruin, promising them peace, and with their solemn pretensions and asseverations emboldening the people to hope that the event would correspond with their predictions; hardening them in sin, and hastening their destruction. *Note*: (1.) To pretend a mission from the Holy Ghost, when men are conscious that they never were *inwardly moved* by him, is daring blasphemy and impiety. (2.) They who run, though God never sent them, will shortly be stopped in their career, and perish in their lie. (3.) A foolish prophet had never yet a mission from God: they cannot be called who are not qualified. (4.) A greedy prophet shews who sent him; not God but Mammon. (5.) They who study to please men's ears, instead of faithfully addressing their consciences, are justly to be suspected as deceivers.

2. Vengeance is denounced against them. God is their enemy; and woe unto those against whom he rises up in anger! As they have justly forfeited all the privileges of God's Israel, they are for ever excluded from them; they

shall either be cut off by death, or be excommunicated from the church; or, when the issue has proved the falsehood of their predictions, they shall be confounded, and ashamed to look those in the face whom they have deluded: they shall be no more consulted, but abhorred as deceivers; shall die in a miserable exile, and never be enrolled with the other captives when they return to their own land, excluded from their mercy, an earnest of eternal exclusion from the heavenly Canaan. And in these judgments inflicted on the false prophets, God will make known the glory of his justice, holiness, and truth.

2dly, The false prophets are farther rebuked and threatened.

1. They deceived the people. They cried *peace*, as if God would give them deliverance from the Babylonish yoke, when *there was no peace*, no prospect as yet of their return from captivity, or hope of their being able to support themselves in rebellion against the Chaldeans. Thus they seduced God's people, those who in profession at least were such, and who had been separated from other nations for his service. *One built up a wall*, pretending that Jerusalem was impregnable, and that the enemy should never break through; and this being formed pleasing to the people, *others daubed it with untempered mortar*, supporting with specious arguments the assertion: when, alas! their wall, however solid it appeared, was weak and tottering, and ready to fall before the first attacks of the besiegers. Such are the plausible errors which heretics introduce, and the smooth prophecies of ministers who dare not honestly offend by their simplicity, but court favour by flattering sinners in their false hopes; the end of which will be the ruin of the deceived and the deceiver together.

2. Judgment is passed upon them. The Chaldean army, as an overflowing shower, as great hail-stones, and a stormy wind, shall overturn all their defences, and lay the walls of Jerusalem in the dust; armed with *the fury of God*, nothing can resist the invaders; and then the vanity of these lying prophets will be seen, and the folly of those who trusted in them be manifest, when they who daubed the wall shall perish under the ruins. *Note*: (1.) The false refuges of the sinner shall in the end prove his bane. (2.) When God is the enemy, resistance is vain. (3.) They who delude others to their destruction shall receive themselves greater damnation.

3. God ridicules their confidence, and triumphs in their fall.

## CHAP. XIV.

*God answereth idolaters according to their own heart. They are exhorted to repent, for fear of judgments by means of seduced prophets. God's irrevocable sentence of famine, of noisome beasts, of the sword, and of pestilence. A penitent remnant shall be reserved for example to others.*

[Before Christ 593.]

**T**HEN came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

2 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

3. Son of man, these men have set up their

idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?

4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols;

5 That I may take the house of Israel in

fall. *When the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?* Those whom they had deceived would abuse them for their false assurances; and the truly pious, who disregarded their predictions, see the hand of God in the whole of these judgments. And it shall be then known and acknowledged that God is the Lord, when his word is thus verified, and his righteous threatenings executed.

3dly, As women, as well as men, had been favoured with divine revelation, there were such now who pretended to inspiration, and, actuated by the same evil spirit as the false prophets, joined them in their lies. Against these the prophet is commanded to set his face. Impudent sinners need a bold reprovcr.

1. The crimes of the false prophetesses are charged upon them.

[1.] They published the fictitious visions of their own hearts, yet solemnly avouched God's authority to give weight to their lies. And too many hearkened to them, hoping or fearing according to their word. *Note;* (1.) Men easily believe what they wish to be true. (2.) When sinners desire to be flattered, and hate to be reprovcd, it is just in God to give them up to deluders.

[2.] They were vilely mercenary. They meant to fleece the deluded people; and impiously prostituted God's sacred name, to gain credit to their predictions; even for a morsel of bread ready to transgress, and to invent a lying answer, such as would please those who consulted them. *Note;* (1.) Nothing is more incompatible with a mission from God, than the love of filthy lucre. (2.) Of all impiety that is chief, to abuse the sacred name of God and religion to serve worldly ends and purposes.

[3.] They used every art to ensnare men's souls, and hunt them into their net; sometimes soothing them with pleasing dreams, sewing pillows to all arm-holes, or elbows, and making kerchiefs upon the head of every stature; intimating thereby how securely they might rest, and fear no enemy to strip off their ornaments; engaging to save the souls alive whom God had doomed to die, and hardening thus the wicked in his impenitence by promising him life, when death temporal and eternal awaited him. On the other hand, sometimes they threatened, denouncing destruction on those whom God had determined to save, and seeking to discourage the righteous, and make their hearts sad whom God hath not made sad. And this some refer particularly to

the captives, whom they severely censured for yielding to the Chaldeans, while they promised those who rebelled against Nebuchadrezzar all success and prosperity. *Note;* (1.) Nothing strengthens the hands of the wicked so much as to be bolstered up with hopes that they may be saved, though they persist in their sins. (2.) They who grieve the hearts of God's people, and seek to discourage them, shall severely suffer for it.

2. God threatens them with deserved wrath. He expostulates with them on the daring impiety of their conduct, and denounces a fearful woe upon them. They shall be shortly silenced and confounded, when by the event their lies should be detected; or they should miserably perish in the siege, and God will rescue his poor people whom they hunted into their toils, *tear off the pillows and kerchiefs*, discover their delusions, expose them to contempt, and make them more abhorred than ever they had been loved or feared; and hereby he will not only deliver his people from their snares, but eminently magnify his own great name. *Note;* (1.) It is an unspeakable mercy, when God saves his people from those who sought to tyrannize over their consciences. (2.) God will not suffer those who trust in him to be led into essential errors by the delusions of false teachers; but will bring them to the knowledge of his blessed Self, comfort their dejected hearts with the views of his free grace and rich salvation, and, shedding abroad his love in their souls, make them both happy and holy.

## CHAP. XIV.

*Ver. 1. Then came certain of the elders]* The prophet tells us neither the names nor the intention of these elders of Israel, nor the time when they came to him. But the manner wherein God speaks, gives us to understand, that they came only to tempt him, as the Pharisees came to Christ, and with no design to profit by what they heard, or to correct their faults. See Calmet.

*Ver. 3. These men have set up their idols]* They are not only inclined to idolatry in their hearts, but have actually set up idols, and worshipped them. However, the prophet shews plainly, that their idolatries consisted not in intirely deserting, but in polluting the religion of Moses with foreign worship. Div. Leg. vol. iv. p. 47.

*Ver. 4. I the Lord will answer him that cometh]* That is, I will take care that the false prophet shall so answer him as his idolatries have deserved. See on ver. 9.

*Ver. 5. That I may take the house of Israel, &c.]* "That I

their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

6 ¶ Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn *yourselves* from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.

7 For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself:

8 And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

9 And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my

hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.

10 And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh *unto him*;

11 That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord GOD.

12 ¶ The word of the LORD came again to me, saying,

13 Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it:

14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver *but*

“ I may deal with them according to their deserts, and thereby convince them that I am a searcher of hearts, and know the inward and secret wickedness of their thoughts.”

Ver. 7. *Of the stranger*] *Of the proselyte who sojourneth in Israel, who estrangeth himself, &c. By myself I Jehovah will answer him, even by myself.*

Ver. 9. *If the prophet be deceived*] The reader will observe, that Ezekiel, or God by Ezekiel, is here speaking of false prophets or anti-prophets, as described in the foregoing chapter; such as had set themselves up in opposition to the true prophets of God. They were prophets that *prophesied out of their own hearts*: ch. xiii. 2. 17. They were *foolish prophets that followed their own spirit, and saw nothing of truth*: ver. 3. They were such as had *seen vanity and lying divination*, pretended to be God's prophets, when the Lord had not sent them: ver. 6, 7. They *seduced the people, saying, Peace, when there was no peace*: ver. 10. 16. Of one of the prophets of this wicked stamp Ezekiel is here speaking, as may easily be perceived by what is said in this same verse, that God *will stretch out his hand upon the prophet, and will destroy him*: (see for remarkable instances, Jer. xxviii. 15—17. and xxix. 21, 22. 31, 32.): and in the next verse it is added; that *the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him*; which words carry a plain intimation, that the prophet here spoken of is understood to have been as bad as the idolaters who are here supposed to consult him, and to have been as much a false prophet, as they were false worshippers; alike in temper and principles, and therefore also to be punished alike, for encouraging idol-worship under false pretences to inspiration. Having seen then what kind of a prophet the text speaks of, it will now be the easier to explain the

rest. God declares that he will *deceive*,—will *disappoint* or *infatuate* such a prophet first, and next *destroy* him: he will give him up first to *strong delusions*, and then to *destruction*. The text may not improperly be rendered thus, *If the prophet be infatuated when he speaketh a thing, I the Lord will infatuate that prophet still more*. So the sense of the passage may amount nearly to the same with that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. i. 20. (or however the verb here may bear the like signification as ἐμώπει there); God hath made foolish the *wisdom of the world*; or to that which Isaiah says, ch. xlv. 25. *that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, or lying prophets, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise-men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish*. But it is observable, that Isaiah subjoins in the verse immediately following; *that confirmeth the word of his servant* (Isaiah the true prophet) *and performeth the counsel of his messengers*. Compare 1 Sam. iii. 19, 20. whence it may be perceived how God illuminates the understandings and ratifies the predictions of his own true prophets, while he *infatuates* the counsels and dis-appoints the lying confidence of evil men and seducers. See Waterland's Scripture Vindicated, part iii. p. 100.

Ver. 13, 14. *When the land sinneth against me*] The design of this and the following verses is, to shew that when the inhabitants of a land have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and God ariseth to execute judgment upon them, the few righteous among them shall not be able to deliver the nation from the judgments determined against it. *They shall deliver but their own souls*, as we see in the case of Sodom, where there were none righteous except Lot and his family; those just persons were saved, but no intercession could prevail with the Almighty to spare the city. *Noah, Daniel, and Job*, were eminent for their piety; *Noah* and his family were saved from the universal deluge,

their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.

15 ¶ If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts;

16 *Though* these three men *were* in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.

17 ¶ Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say; Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it:

18 *Though* these three men *were* in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves.

19 ¶ Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast:

20 *Though* Noah, Daniel, and Job, *were* in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall *but* deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

21 ¶ For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?

22 ¶ Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, *both* sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their

and obtained a promise from the Most High, that he would never again destroy the world by water. Daniel interceded with the Almighty for the whole nation of the Jews, and obtained a promise of their restoration. See Dan. ix. And Job was appointed by God himself to make intercession for his three friends: but when the Almighty is finally determined to punish a rebellious nation, even the prayers of such favourites of heaven would be ineffectual to procure its deliverance. The prophet, in this allusion to Abraham's intercession for Sodom, declares from God, that when his judgments come up against the land of Judæa, the righteous found in it should only deliver their own souls; which plainly shews a Providence extending to all, but more particularly to the truly pious. See Div. Leg. vol. iv. Lowth, and Calmet. The reader will find in Peters's Dissertation on Job, p. 146. a strong proof of the antiquity of the Book of Job, deduced from this passage. Instead of, *when the land*, we should read, *when a land*.

[Daniel] He was taken captive in the third year of Jehoiakim, Dan. i. 1. After this, Jehoiakim reigned eight years, 2 Kings, xxiii. 36. And this prophecy, as appears from ch. viii. 1. was uttered in the sixth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, who succeeded Jehoiakim, and reigned only three months. 2 Kings, xxiv. 6. 8. Therefore at this time Daniel had been fourteen years in captivity.

Ver. 19. *In blood*] *By the pestilence*. Houbigant. The Chaldee reads, *With great slaughter*.

Ver. 22. *Ye shall see their way, &c.*] "Their afflictions shall bring them to a due sense of their former iniquities; and, escaping from these sore judgments, they shall humbly confess their own sins, and the sins of those who were consumed in the destruction of their city: whence it will appear, that I have not punished them beyond what their sins deserved." See Lowth and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

I. Certain of the elders of Israel waiting on the pro-

phet with apparent concern about their souls, and solicitude to hear and receive his admonitions. Whether they were of the captivity, or some who had come on business from Jerusalem to Babylon, is uncertain, *Note*; The face of devotion and seriousness is often put on by those who are utterly destitute of the power of godliness.

2. God let the prophet know what manner of men these were, whose hearts so ill corresponded with their exterior appearance. *They have set up their idols in their heart, or caused them to ascend upon their heart*; their affections were placed upon them, their hearts the throne of idolatry; and, though at a distance from their images, still slaves to these vanities; such an ascendant had they over them. *They put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face*, and fall down to the stock and stone: and should such dare inquire of God? what impious effrontery! what answer can be expected, but wrath to the uttermost? *Note*; (1.) Heart-idols are equally abominable with those that are the work of men's hands; and covetousness, self-love, &c. &c. as much idolatry as the bowing down to gods of gold or silver. (2.) They who put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before them, can expect nothing but to fall into the pit of destruction.

3. The Lord gives him an answer for them. With God there is no respect of persons; whoever draws near to him in hypocrisy, shall bear his burden, and receive an answer according to the multitude of his idols; he will give them up to the delusions which they have chosen, and punish them according to their crimes: *That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart*, exposing their sin and folly, and bringing them to deserved shame and punishment; *because they are all estranged from me through their idols*, alienated from the service and worship of God by their attachment to these abominations. *Note*; Our own hearts are naturally our great plague and snare; they seduce us from God to indulge some favourite lust, the idol within, and in spite of the remonstrances of God's word, and our own consciences, hurry us on to our ruin.

4. A solemn warning is given them to repent, on pain of



doings : and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, *even* concerning all that I have brought upon it.

23 And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings : and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God.

of eternal perdition : be they native Israelites, or sojourners among them, they have the same call ; they must turn from their idols, and from all their abominations ; else, if they continue to *separate themselves* from God in this hated service, and walk in these iniquities, God will speak to them in terrible wrath, confound that daring impiety and hypocrisy which leads them to the prophet, pretending to consult him ; will make them spectacles of horror, cut them off by sudden death, and by these monuments of vengeance teach others to tremble, and fear to offend that God who is a consuming fire. *Note ;* (1.) The hypocrite shall be detected and confounded, often in this world, at farthest in a judgment-day. (2.) Of all sinners the hypocrite's doom will be most terrible, Mat. xxiv. 51.

5. The doom of the false prophets is read. The deceiver and the deceived shall perish together. Since the people choose their own delusions, God will give up the prophets whom they consulted to a lying spirit, 1 Kings, xxii. 22, 23, and in just judgment suffer them to be deceived by the devil. He will stretch out his avenging arm, and utterly destroy them from the midst of the people ; and both the false prophet, and they who seek to him, shall bear the punishment of their iniquity, dreadful as their aggravated provocations. Mysterious are the ways of God ; and, though we are often lost in our inquiries why he permits the evil that we see, the day will come when all his dispensations will be proved, beyond contradiction, to be altogether righteous and true.

6 The judgments executed on the wicked will be a warning to many of the house of Israel, that they go no more astray, beholding the dire effects which arise from such departures from God, and made wise by the sufferings of others : *neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions*, which would necessarily involve them in the same ruin ; but on the contrary learn to love and serve the blessed God, that they may be my people, approving their fidelity to the end, and I may be their God, saith the Lord God, blessing them with all good things here, and their portion and exceeding great reward hereafter. *Note ;* (1.) The punishments of others should deter us from their iniquities. (2.) Sin defiles the soul, and renders it odious in the eyes of a holy God. (3.) They who are, and continue to approve themselves to God, as his faithful people, shall find the present and eternal advantages of his love and favour.

2dly, We have,

1. The heavy judgments threatened on a guilty land. When the measure of their sins is full, wrath to the uttermost will overtake them. Four sore plagues are mentioned ; *Famine*, when the staff of bread is broken, and man and beast perish with hunger. *Noisome beasts*, so numerous and ravenous, that all travelling must be unsafe, and the land deserted and desolate. *The sword*, commissioned of God to go through the land, and consume what the famine had left : and *pestilence*, which depopulates the

country, and puts a taint in the blood incurably fatal. These are the arrows bent against wicked nations.

2. All intercession is vain when the decree is gone forth. Though Noah, Job, and Daniel joined as advocates, their piety and prayers could be of no avail. They could not deliver a son or daughter ; their own souls only should be given them for a prey. The mention of Job, with Noah and Daniel, clearly proves, that he really lived, and answered the character given him in the book which bears his name ; eminent for patience as Noah for his integrity, when all flesh had corrupted their ways ; and as Daniel, who, though a young man, had already appeared distinguished by his wisdom, humility, piety, zeal, and prayer. Perhaps some few remained who resembled these holy men, and for their sake a hope might be entertained that Jerusalem would yet be spared, as Sodom might have been if but ten righteous had been found in it. Indeed, if any thing could have averted the threatened wrath, these advocates had prevailed ; but her time is come, the measure of her guilt is full, her ruin determined, and the wrath denounced inevitable. *Note ;* (1.) In the worst of times, some few eminent saints are found. (2.) Though they may not prevail to avert the ruin of their land, themselves shall be saved amid the general desolations, sometimes exempted from the common calamity, and wonderfully preserved : at least, if they suffer with others, they shall enjoy divine consolations ; and whatever becomes of their bodies, their souls, faithfully resting on Jesus, shall be ever with their Lord.

3. A remnant is reserved from the general ruin, brought forth out of Jerusalem to join their brethren in captivity ; and ye shall see their way and their doings ; either behold their penitent return to God, humbled and converted by the judgments that they have suffered ; or their hardened wickedness, which would convince the captives of the righteous judgment of God upon them ; and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem ; pleased to see the blessed effects wrought thereby, if it led the sufferers to repentance ; or satisfied of the justice of God in his severity upon such transgressors : and they shall comfort you, when ye see their way and their doings ; either it would delight them to see the gracious symptoms of their conversion ; or, if they persisted in their abominations, they would no longer grieve for their sufferings, but justify God in them ; and ye shall know that I have not done without cause, all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God ; but that the Lord in all his dispensations is righteous, just, and good. *Note ;* (1.) Nothing will hereafter be matter of greater thankfulness to God's people, than those bitterest afflictions here which have contributed to the good of their souls. (2.) God will be glorified in all his works, and his saints will adore him and delight in them : even the punishment of the wicked shall redound to his honour, and minister matter for their praises.

## C H A P. XV.

*By the unfitness of the vine-branch for any work, is shewed the rejection of Jerusalem.*

[Before Christ 593.]

**A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, What is the vine-tree more than any tree, or *than* a branch which is among the trees of the forest?

3 Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will *men* take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?

4 Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned: is it meet for *any* work?

## C H A P. XV.

*Ver. 2. What is the vine-tree?* Houbigant renders it, *What hath the wood of the vine above other branching woods which are amid the trees of the wood?* The comparison is here made between the trees of the forest and the wild vine; not the fruitful and generous vine, as appears from the words, *among the trees of the forest*; for this vine then produced nothing but sour and bitter grapes: so that Israel could no longer glory in this, that God had frequently called them *his vine*. It is upon this point, says Houbigant, that the present allegory wholly turns. Infidels object, that they cannot understand why God should prefer so perverse and rebellious a people to all others. One reason is, that it was for the sake of their forefathers, and to fulfil the promise made to the patriarchs; but others are not wanting, and those very agreeable to the ideas that we have of infinite wisdom; such, for instance, as this: that the extraordinary providences by which they were protected might become the more visible and illustrious; for, had they been endowed with the shining qualities of the more polished nations of the present day, the effects of that Providence might have been ascribed to their own power or wisdom. Their impotence and inability, when left to themselves, is finely represented in this chapter by the similitude of a *vine tree*: for, as the vine, which by culture and support is the most valuable of all trees, becomes the most worthless when left neglected in its own natural state; so the Jews, after they made such a superior figure under the protection of God, became the weakest and most contemptible of all tributary nations, when for their sins that protection was withdrawn. See the Divine Legation, vol. iv. and Calmet.

*Ver. 3. Shall wood be taken thereof?* It is observable, that the wood of the vine is of no use in building, or in making any piece of furniture or domestic utensil. Bishop Lowth observes, that it is the chief excellence of a parable to consist of an image which is known and proper to the subject, and whose end is plain and determined by custom; the necessary consequence of which is perspicuity,

5 Behold, when it was whole it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for *any* work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned?

6 Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; As the vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

7 And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from *one* fire, and *another* fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I set my face against them.

8 And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord God.

wherein the chief beauty of an allegory consists. The prophets frequently make use of this kind of images, by way of comparison or illustration; and this of the *useless vine*, by which these ungrateful people are more than once described, is an image of this sort. See his 10th Prelection.

*Ver. 4. The fire devoureth, &c.]* A very apt representation of the state of Judæa, when both its extremities were consumed by the ravages of the destroyer; and the middle of it, where the capital city stood, was threatened every moment with destruction from the enemy. Instead of, *The midst of it is burned*, Houbigant reads very properly, *The middle of it is scorched*; "is now, as it were, just about to catch fire, and to be burned. If therefore that middle should be snatched out of the fire, would it be of any use? Certainly not; for if it was useless before it was scorched, how much more, &c." See the next verse.

*Ver. 7. They shall go out from one fire, &c.]* "That is, (says Calmet,) if they escape the sword, they shall perish by famine; if they escape the famine, they shall be taken captive by the enemy; they shall fall from one calamity into another." See Pf. lxxvi. 12. But Houbigant, displeased with the addition of *one* and *another* made to the text, renders it, *Shall they escape from the fire? Certainly the fire shall devour them, and ye shall, &c.*

*Ver. 8. Because they have committed a trespass]* *Because they have grievously trespassed.* The Vulgate and Chaldee have it, *Because they have been prevaricators*. "They are not mere sinners," says St. Jerome, "like other nations, but have been guilty of prevarication;" for it is another thing to neglect what a person is ignorant of, and another to condemn what we should worship.

REFLECTIONS.—Jerusalem in her beauty was the joy of the whole earth; but now that sin has defiled her, the flames are kindling to devour her palaces.

1. She is compared to a wild and barren vine, the most unprofitable and useless tree in the forest; unfit for any

CHAP. XVI.

*Under the similitude of a wretched infant, is shewed the natural state of Jerusalem. God's extraordinary love towards her: her monstrous whoredom: her grievous judgment: her sin, matching her mother, and exceeding her sisters Sodom and Samaria; calleth for judgments. Mercy is promised in the end to her penitent children.*

[Before Christ 593.]

**A** GAIN the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,

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

4 And as for thy nativity, in the day thou

wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.

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

6 ¶ And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.

7 I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine

work, and only suited for fuel to the fire. And if when flourishing it be not fit for any service, how much less when reduced to ashes.

2. The application of this similitude to Jerusalem follows. This city, with the inhabitants thereof, as the unprofitable vine, is doomed to the flames, because of their great provocations. God's wrath is kindled; and his face, as an implacable enemy, set against them; they were wholly unprofitable, brought him no glory: yea, noxious as the plants of a wild vine; therefore their land shall be desolate, the fire devour them, and one calamity on another pursue them, till they are utterly consumed, and God terribly made known to them, in the judgments that he would execute upon them. *Note*; Wrath pursues impenitent sinners, till it is perfected in the everlasting burnings.

CHAP. XVI.

JERUSALEM is represented under the image of an exposed infant, whom God preserved from destruction, brought up, espoused, and exalted to sovereignty. But she proved faithless and abandoned; and therefore God threatens her with severe vengeance; but graciously promises that hereafter he will fulfil his early covenant with her.

The allegory is easily understood; and, as Mr. Lowth observes, has much force, liveliness, and vehemence of eloquent amplification. The images are adapted to a people immersed in sensuality. See Bishop Lowth, Præl. Hebr. xxxi. p. 403. 2d. ed. 8vo.

*Ver. 2. Cause Jerusalem to know, &c.]* This order was probably performed by way of letter, as Jeremiah signified the will of the Almighty to the captives of Babylon. God here particularly upbraids the city of Jerusalem for her iniquities, because it was the place that he had chosen for his peculiar residence; and yet the inhabitants had defiled that very place, nay, and even the temple itself, with idolatry; the sin particularly denoted by the word *abominable*. Nothing, says Calmet, can give us a greater horror of the

crimes of Jerusalem, than the manner in which Ezekiel speaks here. This city must certainly have carried her impiety to the greatest height, to merit reproaches so lively and strong.

*Ver. 3. Thy birth, and thy nativity, &c.]* *Thy root, or origin, and thy nativity, &c.* As much as to say, "You dishonour the race of Abraham, whence you are descended; you deserve much rather the name of a Canaanite than of an Israelite." The Amorites and Hittites appear to have been the most corrupted of all the Canaanites: a more ignominious appellation could not be given to a Hebrew, than to call him of the race of Canaan. Isaiah calls the princes of Judah, *rulers of Sodom*; ch. i. 10. and St. John the Baptist calls the Pharisees, *a generation of vipers*. Heathen authors, in the transports of their enthusiasm, frequently expressed themselves in the same manner. Virgil makes Dido say to Æneas,

*Nec tibi diva parens, &c.*

Pernicious monster! boast thy birth no more;

No hero got thee, and no goddess bore.

No!—thou wert brought by Scythian rocks to day,

By tigers nurs'd, and savages of prey;

But far more rugged, wild, and fierce than they.

Æn. book vi. ver. 525, &c. WARTON.

*Ver. 4. And as for thy nativity]* "Thou wast abandoned like an infant, whereof no care is taken, and which is about to be exposed. The expressions used in this verse allude to the customs observed by eastern nations at the birth of their children; and the design of the prophet is to mark out that state of impurity wherein the Hebrews were found in Egypt; plunged in idolatry and ignorance, and oppressed with cruel servitude.

*Ver. 6. Polluted in thine own blood]* *Wallowing in thy blood.* The last clause of this verse is not found in the Syriac and LXX. That horrid custom of the ancients of exposing their infants when they could not support them, or when the children had any natural defects, is very well known. This inhumanity was not permitted among the

Hebrews;

hair is grown, whereas thou *wast* naked and bare.

8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time *was* the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

9 Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.

10 I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin; and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.

11 I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck.

12 And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.

13 Thus *wast* thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment *was of* fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou *wast* exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.

14 And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it *was* perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.

15 ¶ But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.

16 And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: *the like things* shall not come, neither shall it be so.

17 Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them;

18 And tookedst thy brodered garments and coveredst them; and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them.

19 My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, *wherewith* I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet favour: and *thus* it was, saith the Lord GOD.

20 Moreover, thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. *Is this* of thy whoredoms a small matter,

21 That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through *the fire* for them?

22 And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days

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Hebrews; but Ezekiel alludes to it, as a matter very common among other nations. See Calmet.

Ver. 7. *I have caused, &c.] I have caused thee to multiply as the grass of the field; and thou didst increase and grow up to maturity, and didst arrive to the perfection of beauty. Thy breasts were fashioned, and thy tresses sprouted out; but still thou wast naked, and bare.*

Ver. 8. *Behold, &c.]* See Ruth, iii. 9. The Jews' deliverance out of Egypt is often described as the time of God's espousing them to himself; and his entering into covenant with them represented by a marriage-contract. See Jer. ii. 2.

Ver. 9. *Then washed I thee with water, &c.]* "I added every thing which had the least tendency to contribute to thy beauty and ornament." The anointing with oil was reckoned a necessary ingredient in a festival dress. See Ruth, iii. 3. 2 Sam. xiv. 2. This and the following verses allude to those parts of the woman's attire, which not only serve for use, but are used for elegance or luxury; and import, that God did not only provide the Jews with

necessaries, but also with superfluities or abundance. Instead of *badger's skins*, Houbigant reads, *purple sandals*.

Ver. 12. *I put a jewel on thy forehead]* I put thee on a nose-jewel. See Gen. xxiv. 47. and Houbigant. See also Cant. iii. 11.

Ver. 13. *And thou didst prosper into a kingdom]* And, in fine, *wast advanced to a kingdom*; Houbigant, who instead of *comeliness*, in the next verse, reads *glory*.

Ver. 15. *But thou didst trust, &c.]* But thou, trusting on thy beauty, didst play the harlot, *degenerating from thy renown*. Houbigant. The Hebrews polluted their glory, and profaned the great name of the Lord which was their honour, by their frequent and scandalous idolatries.

Ver. 16. *The like things, &c.]* And *hast refused to be mine*. Houbigant.

Ver. 17. *Images of men]* Idol images, or images for worship.

Ver. 19. *And thus it was, &c.]* Houbigant begins the next verse with this clause, which he reads thus; *Nay, moreover, saith the Lord God; and he ends the 20th verse with*

of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood.

23 And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord GOD;)

24 That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street.

25 Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms.

26 Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger.

27 Behold, therefore, I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way.

28 Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unfatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied.

29 Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith.

30 How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman!

31 In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street! and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire;

32 But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!

33 They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom.

34 And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary.

35 ¶ Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD:

36 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children which thou didst give unto them;

37 Behold, therefore, I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

38 And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.

with the word *devoured*, and begins the 21st verse thus, *Was it a small matter for thee to have played the harlot, that thou must also slay my children, and deliver them to be consecrated unto them?* The allusion here seems to be to the horrid sacrifices of Moloch.

Ver. 24. *An eminent place*] *A brothel-house.* Houbigant. See also ver. 31. 39. Instead of, *Hast made thy beauty to be abhorred*, ver. 25. he reads, *And, dishonouring thy beauty, thou hast*, &c.

Ver. 26. *Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians*] The prophet objects to the Jews the three principal superstitions described chap. viii. 15, &c. Fornication, adultery, and whoredom, are the constant figures under which the Holy Spirit represents the idolatries of the Israelites; consequently, by this character of the Egyptians, being great of flesh, we are given to understand that Egypt was the grand origin and incentive to idolatry, and the propagator of it among the rest of mankind. Div. Leg. vol. iii.

P. 335.  
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Ver. 29. *In the land of Canaan unto Chaldea*] *With the land of Canaan, &c.* Or, as Houbigant renders it, *In the land of merchants among the Chaldeans.*

Ver. 30. *How weak is thine heart, &c.*] *How shall I circumcise thine heart, &c.* Houbigant.

Ver. 33. *They give, &c.*] *To harlots gifts are presented, but thou presentest thy gifts, &c.*

Ver. 34. *Whereas none followeth thee, &c.*] *Nor is thy way like that of an harlot, for thou hast given a reward, &c.* The intelligent reader, says Bishop Warburton, perceives, that the meaning of the metaphor is, "You Jews are contrary to all other nations; you are fond of borrowing their rites; while none of them care to borrow yours, or to take any of them into their national worship." See Div. Leg. vol. iii.

Ver. 36. *Because thy filthiness, &c.*] *Because thy money, or thy brass.* Houbigant.

Ver. 38. *I will judge thee, as women, &c.*] *As adulteresses and shedders of blood are judged; and I will take the same punishment*

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39 And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare.

40 They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords.

41 And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more.

42 So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.

43 Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore, I also will recompense thy way upon *thine* head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

44 ¶ Behold, every one that useth proverbs

shall use *this* proverb against thee, saying, *As is the mother, so is her daughter.*

45 Thou *art* thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou *art* the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother *was* an Hittite, and your father an Amorite.

46 And thine elder sister *is* Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, *is* Sodom and her daughters.

47 Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as *if that were* a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways.

48 *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters.

49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

50 And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

*punishment of thee which is taken by a furious and jealous husband.* Houbigant. The prophet alludes to the waters of jealousy, spoken of in the law. The common punishment of adultery was stoning. See John, viii. 5. And the prophet here alludes to what should follow in the siege of Jerusalem, from the warlike machines of the Chaldeans. See ver. 40, 41.

*Ver. 42. So will I make my fury toward thee to rest]* Though it be more grateful to God's excellent nature to awaken men with his bounty than with his chastisement, yet he can punish with as little noise as he can relieve: it is but withdrawing himself, giving men up to their own hearts' lust, letting them walk in their own counsels, and have all they desire to have; and they are insensibly as miserable as their most outrageous enemies desire to see them. The oldest and most obstinate sinners have the same desires, the same childish desires with little children: they wish to be let alone; and God gratifies them, and lets them alone: and woe unto them who are so left!—There is not a more terrible denunciation of judgment and vengeance in all the most heightened expressions of the prophets, than in that unconcerned determination and denunciation which the Lord here makes by Ezekiel, after all other experiments and expedients had failed. *I will cause my fury towards thee to rest,* &c. All his threats, all the strokes of his displeasure, all the mortification which the people had undergone by it, were not so intolerable as was this cessa-

tion of his fury, this departure of his jealousy, and this quietness and laying aside of his anger. While he had any kindness left for her, any good purposes towards her, he was jealous for Sion, with great jealousy and great fury; the kindness was for ever expired, when the fury and the jealousy were extinguished. We are to pray that he will rather deliver us up to our worst enemies, than give us up to ourselves, to our own heart's desire.

*Ver. 44. Every one that useth proverbs]* They who love to apply the memorable sayings of former ages to the present times, shall apply that common proverb to thee, "That the daughter followeth the mother's steps;" and that Jerusalem is no better than the Amorites, whose land she inhabits, and whose manners she imitates. See Lowth, and the note on ver. 3.

*Ver. 46. Thine elder sister is Samaria]* Samaria is called the *elder sister* of Jerusalem, as being the capital city of the ten tribes, a much larger kingdom than that of Judah: she also led the way to that idolatry which afterwards infected the whole nation; forsaking the worship which God had appointed in his temple, and setting up the golden calves. Sodom is called the *younger sister*, as having also abounded in every idolatrous practice. The prophet here considers Samaria and Sodom as two cities still subsisting; though Sodom had been long since destroyed, and Samaria had been overthrown one hundred and twenty-seven years before this prophecy of Ezekiel. The vices of Sodom and Samaria

51 Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.

52 Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.

53 When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then *will I bring again* the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them:

54 That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.

55 When thy sisters, Sodom and her daugh-

ters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.

56 For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride,

57 Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of *thy* reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all *that are* round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about.

58 Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the LORD.

59 For thus saith the Lord God; I will even deal with thee, as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

60 ¶ Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.

Samaria were not attended with such aggravating circumstances as those of Jerusalem; for they had not been blessed with the same great privileges. The reader will find a great similarity between the reasoning here and in the Gospel, Matt. xi. 20—24.

*Ver. 51—53. And hast justified thy sisters, &c.] And hast made thy sisters innocent, in comparison of the crimes which thou hast committed. Ver. 52. Thou therefore shalt bear thine own shame, since by thy sins thou hast formed the judgment of thy sisters; because thou hast been more wicked than they: They are righteous in comparison of thee: Therefore shalt thou be confounded, and shalt bear thine own shame; because thou hast made thy sisters innocent. Ver. 53. I have carried away their captives; as the captives of Sodom and her daughters, so the captives of Samaria and her daughters: Therefore will I bring to them thy captives also. Ver. 54. That thou, &c. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 56—58. For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned, &c.] Nor shalt thou any more mention thy sister with reproach, as in the day of thy pride. Ver. 57. Namely, before thy wickedness was discovered; and the time of thy reproach was the same as that of the daughters of Syria, and of all her neighbours, and of the daughters of the Philistines who dwell round about thee. Ver. 58. Thou shalt bear, &c. Houbigant.* The exemplary punishment of Sodom was not duly considered, and spoken of, by thee in the time of thy prosperity and self-confidence; before thy humiliation shewed thy wickedness, and defeats and distresses were brought on thee by the Syrians and Philistines.

*Ver. 60. Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee]* The prophet here reminds the Jews of the mercies of God reserved for them in their restoration and return under the Messiah, when the Gentiles also, specified here by the *elder* and *younger* sister, shall also be called in; *but*

*not by thy covenant, says the Lord; ver. 61. that is to say* “Not by virtue of the old covenant made with your fathers, when they came out of Egypt, the privileges of which you have forfeited by your disobedience; but by virtue of the new covenant which I will make with you through the mediation of the Messiah; a covenant founded in love, cemented by the blood of Jesus, and delivering from the yoke of the law.”

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Ezekiel has a commission here given him to prophesy against Jerusalem. Abominations great and aggravated were in her, and he must *cause* her to know them; at least leave her and the inhabitants inexcusable if they rejected the admonition. And as nothing is more hateful than ingratitude, he must remind them of their base original and wretched state when God was pleased to distinguish them with his favours; and he must upbraid them with their infamous unfaithfulness.

1. They were in their origin vile and despicable. *Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan*; there Abraham sojourned, and the patriarchs and the Jewish nation seemed as if thence sprung; while their descendants, in their temper and manners, copied too closely after the Canaanites, whose land they possessed. *Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite*; not literally, for Abraham and Sarah were Chaldeans; but, by dwelling afterwards among the Amorites and Hittites, they were reckoned as natives of the soil: and in their practices the Jewish people imitated these wicked nations.

2. They were as a miserable helpless infant, abandoned the moment it was born, exposed in its blood without a friendly hand to wash, supple, or swaddle the wretched babe, or a compassionate eye to pity it: nay, contrariwise, loathed and abhorred; which seems to refer to the state



61 Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger; and I

will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant.

62 And I will establish my covenant with

of the Jewish people in Egypt, where their infants were exposed, themselves hated, oppressed, and ready to perish, if God's compassions had not interposed to rescue them from instant destruction: and what is said of them, may be applied with a beautiful propriety to all the Israel of God, as well as to the obstinately, wilfully impenitent.—By nature corrupt and born in sin, loathsome in the eyes of God, none able or willing to wash away their guilt, exposed to unavoidable ruin, helpless and hopeless—but for the interposition of divine grace.

2dly, Eminently great and distinguished were the favours that God shewed to this forlorn infant, the figure of the Jewish nation.

1. God rescued them from ruin. He saw them lying in their blood, and said unto them, *Live*; delivering them from the bondage of Egypt when they were ready to perish; and the like he does for all his spiritual Israel, all who will yield to be saved by grace. He *sees* their misery, guilt, and helplessness; *passes* by them; speaks the life-giving word; opens the fountain for sin and for uncleanness in a Saviour's side; washes them from all their defilement; and implants in their souls principles of spiritual life.

2. He multiplied them, so that they grew up as an infant to woman's stature, and became marriageable; adorned them as a bride, with jewels, the spoil of the Egyptians; washed and anointed them; not only delivered them from the reproach of servitude, but arrayed them with gorgeous apparel, gave them abundance of good things, erected them into a great kingdom, and set up his sanctuary among them: and this may be applied to the gifts and graces of God's Spirit, wherewith he beautifies the souls of believers.

3. He loved them, entered into covenant with them, and espoused them to himself. He *spread his skirt over them*, as their husband and protector; and as a wife of youth, so warmly and tenderly did he regard them: so that *thy time was the time of love*; he not only dealt with them in a way of singular affection, but they also professed themselves wholly his, to love, enjoy, obey him. And at Sinai the marriage-contract might be said to be signed, God there engaging to be their God, and they in return solemnly pledging their fidelity to him. *Note*; (1.) When God first manifests his grace to the miserable sinner; and, plucking him as a brand from the belly of hell, shews him his deadly guilt cancelled by redeeming love, and the kingdom of heaven below open to receive him; that *time* is emphatically a *time of love*, as God's people have proved by delightful experience. (2.) If God be ours in a covenant of promise, we are bound by every tie of love and duty to approve our fidelity before him. (3.) The soul that is sheltered under the skirt of divine protection, is safe from the fear of evil.

4. As he made them great by his favour, he raised their fame high among the nations around them. They saw and admired their beauty; and in the happy days of David and Solomon, nothing seemed wanting to render the

national happiness complete; when abroad they were revered and honoured, and at home enjoyed peace and plenty, the upright administration of justice, and the most abundant means of grace: such *perfect comeliness* had God put on them. *Note*; All the comeliness of the believer is of the gift of God, and must be acknowledged to his glory: we have nothing that we have not received.

3dly, The peculiar favours which the Jewish people had received, exceedingly aggravated the guilt of their apostacy.

1. They grew proud of their distinguished mercies, forgot their original meanness, trusted in their beauty, and forsook the Rock of their salvation to *play the harlot* with dumb idols. *Note*; (1.) The pride of beauty has often proved the bane of its possessor. (2.) Forgetfulness of God and ourselves is at the bottom of all our sinful departures from him.

2. They ran into the grossest idolatry. *Thou pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was*: as a common strumpet with her paramours, so ready were they to embrace every new deity that offered, *multiplying their whoredoms*, beyond all other nations. Lavish on these wretched idols, their high places, like the harlot's bed, were decked with *divers colours*; and the jewels that God had given them employed to fashion and adorn their miserable deities. *The like things shall not come, neither shall it be so*, no such scandalous idolatry ever was, or shall be practised again. Before the images, the work of their own hands, they lavished their incense and offerings, counting nothing too much to spend in the gratification of their lusts. *Thus it was, saith the Lord God, open, avowed, and notorious*. And as if all the rest had not been enough, their very children, those dearest gifts of God, (shocking to relate!) they had sacrificed to these hated idols: inhuman, barbarous, unnatural, and robbing God of the property that he claimed in them. *They are my children*, saith he, not only as he had given them life and being, but as having taken them into covenant with himself through the Son of his love. *Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter?* Some perhaps affected to treat them as such, though so heinous and terrible; or the sense is, their other wickedness was great, but this the summit of iniquity. With open effrontery, as a hardened harlot, whose forehead is brass, and knows no shame; so had they built an *eminent place*, had set up their idol temples and altars in every street, and in the highway, endeavouring to draw every passenger to commit adultery and idolatry; making their beauty to be abhorred of God and all good men; yea, of the very heathen, as a despicable and hated strumpet. And her weakness herein appeared great as her wickedness; therefore a fearful woe is denounced against her, the dreadful effects of which will be seen in time and in eternity. *Note*; (1.) Our gold and silver are not our own, but God's; and to him we are accountable for the use that we make of them. (2.) The lavishness of idolaters should shame the niggardliness of the worshippers of the true God. (3.) They who bring up their children in pride

thee and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD:

3 That thou mayest remember; and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any

more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD.

pride and vanity, and by their ill examples encourage them in sin, are in some sense more grievously guilty than even these idolaters: the one only murdered their bodies; the others also murder their souls, and sacrifice them to devils. (4.) Many make light of sin now as a small matter; but the punishment of it will be found insupportably heavy. (5.) Wickedness and weakness are inseparably connected. None but fools can barter the momentary pleasures of sin for the eternal torments of hell.

3. There were peculiar circumstances attending their sins, which rendered them exceedingly aggravated.

[1.] Their insatiable lust after new gods, ever doting on the idols of those nations from whom they had suffered most grievously. They committed fornication with the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Canaanites; and nothing seemed too far fetched, or too dearly bought, so great was their rage for idolatry; and after all they could *not be satisfied*, but still craved for more. *Note;* (1.) Lawless lust is ever tormenting, craving, insatiate. (2.) They who forsake God can never find abiding satisfaction in any thing beside.

[2.] Their unhumbed obstinacy under the rebukes that God had given them. His heavy hand had been again and again laid on them: he would have brought them to repentance under his chastisements. The famine wasted them; the Philistines ravaged their country, 2 Chron. xxviii. 18, 19. and even these idolaters were ashamed of the inconstancy of the Jewish people in so often changing their gods: yet every correction left them still hardened, and they sinned yet more and more. *Note;* When neither mercies draw, nor corrections bend, the case seems utterly desperate.

[3.] Their diversity from all other people. Other harlots prostituted themselves for hire, and gained something by their wickedness; but they, as a shameless adulteress, not only courted but hired their lovers at a vast expence, contracting alliances with the Assyrians and Egyptians, 2 Kings, xvi. 8. Isa. xxx. 6, 7. soliciting their friendship, and hiring their gods for protectors.

4thly, It cannot be thought possible that such a guilty land should long be spared: God's justice requires vengeance to be executed on such a nation as this.

1. Her crimes are recited, that God may appear righteous in his judgments. Her filthy idolatries; the blood of murdered infants; her shameless lewdness; her base ingratitude; her long repeated provocations, which God speaks of as having grieved and *fretted* him to behold,—these were her sins, too flagrant to be denied, and too heinous to admit of excuse.

2. Sentence is pronounced upon her. Murder and adultery were capital crimes, and therefore her judgment is an ignominious death. Both those who loved and they who hated her will be spectators of her fall; yea, they shall be made the executioners of vengeance upon her,

shall strip her of all her wealth and ornaments, and leave her naked to her shame. As a jealous husband, and as the avenger of blood, God will punish her; *she shall be stoned, and thrust through with swords*, when the Chaldean army, battered down the walls of Jerusalem, massacred the inhabitants, destroyed the high places, and burnt the city with fire. Thus God will recompense her according to her deserts, and make her a public example to *other women*, to the nations around, who, seeing her plagues, might be deterred from her sins. *Note;* (1.) God justly makes those our tormentors to whom we have been tempters. (2.) Whatever sinners suffer, it is no more than their just desert. (3.) The judgments inflicted on others should warn us against their wicked ways.

3. When God has destroyed their idolatry, then he will rest from his fury; his jealousy shall depart, and the effects of his anger be removed. The captivity cured the Jews effectually of all inclination to idolatry; and then the controversy ceased, and God restored them again to their own land. Some, however, understand this of their utter ruin and destruction, when they should no more be able to play the harlot; and when God, having executed his wrath upon them, would rest satisfied in the righteous doom under which they perished. *Note;* Sin is at the root of all God's controversies with us: when the cause is removed, the effect will cease.

5thly, The wickedness of the Jewish people is farther described by comparison with other nations.

1. They were as bad as the Canaanites, whom the Lord had cast out before them. They who use proverbs, shall say, *As is the mother, so is her daughter*; they exactly copied the manners of these nations, and seemed rather sprung from an Hittite and Amorite, than from Abraham and Sarah. They bore the true character of an adulteress, *loathing her husband and children*; so did they forsake God their husband for idols, and sacrifice their children to them, as the Canaanites had done before them, though so awfully warned against their wicked ways, Lev. xviii. 27, 28.

2. They not only resembled, but exceeded the wickedness of Sodom and Samaria. *Thou art the sister of thy sisters*, like them in all their abominations, apostate from God, and devoted to the most shocking idolatry. Samaria, at the left hand, towards the north, is called the *elder*, or *greater sister*, because the metropolis of the ten tribes; while Jerusalem was only at the head of two: and Sodom, *her younger sister*, because a smaller city, which lay at her right hand towards the south, with her *daughter* villages. The sins of Sodom are particularly marked; pride, gluttony, idleness, uncharitableness, oppression: and Jerusalem had equalled, yea, exceeded them in all; not content to walk in their ways, she grew more corrupt and abominable in her doings; nor had her sister Samaria half her guilt. Her idols were more numerous, and her sins more aggravated by the means and mercies that she had enjoyed.

She.

## C H A P. XVII.

*Under the parable of two eagles and a vine, is shewed God's judgment upon Jerusalem for revolting from Babylon to Egypt. God promiseth to plant the cedar of the Gospel.*

[Before Christ 593.]

**A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

She had judged them formerly, and severely censured and condemned them and their wickedness, 2 Chron. xiii. 8—10.; but now her conduct justified and patronized all their iniquities, and comforted them with the plea, that the men of Judah were as bad, or worse than they: with shame and confusion, therefore, ought she to be covered, for her more grievous transgressions; either in repentance for them, or suffering the punishment due to them. And another cause also for shame is suggested, *For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride*; in their prosperity they disdained the mention of the name of Sodom; or, they took no warning by her doom; to tremble for their own. *Note*; (1.) Pride is at the root of all sin. (2.) Excess and idleness are the fuel to vile affections. (3.) Let those who read Sodom's sins tremble for themselves, lest the abuse of their blessings should lead them into the same guilt and ruin. (4.) The advantages that we enjoy are a great aggravation of our sins: the same action is doubly guilty in those who sin against light and love. (5.) Sinners must be confounded, either with the shame of penitents here, or with the everlasting shame of reprobates in the day of visitation. (6.) Pride goeth before destruction; they who will not be warned must be ruined.

3. Their judgments would be heavy, as those which fell on the devoted cities of Sodom and Samaria. God had already in a measure humbled their pride, in the discovery of their wickedness, evident in the reproach and insults which they suffered from the Philistines and Syrians, 2 Chron. xxviii. 5. Thus they had begun to bear the punishment of their lewdness and abominations, and God will deal with them farther, as *they had done*; rejecting them for his people, as they had rejected him for their God; despising the oath and breaking the covenant that they had made at Sinai. They are doomed to a miserable captivity; and Sodom and Samaria shall sooner be restored than they: for, however the penitent remnant should be recovered, the wicked would be utterly abandoned to ruin, Jer. xxiv. 9, 10.: though some understand this of the conversion of the Jews, when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in. *Note*; (1.) Sin and the curse are inseparable. (2.) They who make themselves vile by their wickedness, God will make viler still by their sufferings. (3.) Companions in sin will share the same fate, and perish together. (4.) They who reject God, are justly rejected by him.

6thly, The chapter closes with a gleam of hope; and mercy yet triumphs over judgment. Though *they* were false and faithless, God would have a people from among the Jews in the days of the Messiah; to which the promise here has an evident regard. The effects of which should be,

2 Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel;

3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:

1. Their deep and unfeigned humiliation. Overcome with the sense of his pardoning grace and love, they shall remember their ways, and be confounded for all their abominations; silenced, not daring to complain of God's judgments, but acknowledging their deserts: and the more firmly they are assured of his being pacified towards them, the more deeply shall they upbraid their own ingratitude against a God so gracious. *Note*; (1.) The great argument to engage us to evangelical repentance is, a sense of God's reconciliation in Christ Jesus. None abhor themselves so thoroughly, as those who believe his love most assuredly. (2.) We are called upon ever to remember our ways, and be confounded: though God has forgiven us, we should never forgive ourselves.

2. He promises to bring the Gentiles into the communion of his church. The heathen lands, once their sisters in iniquity, shall now be admitted with the Jews into the fellowship of the Gospel, to share all the blessings and privileges thereof; and shall be received by them with warm affection; *but not by thy covenant*; not by the Sinai covenant; not on condition of observing the ceremonial rites and institutions; or not in virtue of their submitting to the terms which the Jews, as conquerors, should impose on them; who, under their carnal Messiah, flattered themselves with extensive empire; no: but by the covenant of grace, in which there is no distinction between Jew or Gentile, both alike being called freely, and entitled to all the promised mercies through faith in the Redeemer.

3. God will herein make his glory eminently to appear. *Thou shalt know that I am the Lord*: he had often before threatened them to make himself known in judgment; now he will be known in mercy. His faithfulness to his promises, and his rich grace, shall be manifested to them.

## C H A P. XVII.

*Ver. 2. Put forth a riddle*] That is to say, a continued metaphor, or figurative speech; an allegory. The prophets frequently offer their instruction under this kind of enigmatical parables. Our Saviour complied with this taste of the easterns in his Gospel. See Calmet.

*Ver. 3. A great eagle, &c.*] This great eagle represents Nebuchadrezzar, according to all the interpreters; his greatness, long wings, beautiful, abundant, and well-coloured plumage, denote the force and greatness of his empire, the rapidity of his conquests, and the number of his subjects. The Scripture has in more places than one described this prince under the figure of an eagle. See Jer. xviii. 40. xlix. 22. Dan. vii. 4. By his coming to Lebanon, and taking the highest branch of the cedar, is meant his invasion of Judæa, his investing the city of Jerusalem, and taking king Jehoiachin and the princes captive. See Calmet.

4 He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffick; he set it in a city of merchants.

5 He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow-tree.

6 And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.

7 There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.

8 It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine.

9 Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof.

10 Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east

wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew.

11 ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

12 Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon;

13 And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land:

14 That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.

15 But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?

16 As I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

17 Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty

*Ver. 4. Carried it into a land of traffick]* Babylon and the country round it, being the seat of universal monarchy, must of consequence have been a place of great trade. Strabo tells us, that the merchants who travelled by land to Babylon, went through the country of the Arabians called Scenitzæ; and their vessels of great burden came up the Euphrates to the walls of the city from the Persian Gulf: in short, the multitude of the people, and the riches of Babylon, brought from all quarters of the world great numbers of merchants.

*Ver. 5. He took also of the seed, &c.]* He took also [a cion] of the product of the land, and set it in the planting ground. He placed it, &c. Hereby is meant Zedekiah, who was of the seed royal, whom Nebuchadrezzar established king in Judæa.

*Ver. 6. A spreading vine of low stature]* This implies, that though Zedekiah was opulent and at ease, yet he was without force, without authority, and wholly dependent on the king of Chaldaea.

*Ver. 7. There was also another great eagle]* That is, Pharaoh Apries, king of Egypt, a great and powerful prince, though less so than the king of Babylon. Zedekiah made an alliance with him, whereupon an army of Egyptians

came to his assistance, and raised the siege of Jerusalem. See Jer. xxxvii. 5, &c. Instead of *great*, we may read, *large wings*: and the last clause may be rendered, *And shot forth its branches under him, from the furrows where it was planted, that he might water it.*

*Ver. 8. It was planted]* It had been planted.

*Ver. 9. It shall wither, &c.]* It shall altogether wither; nor shall the mighty arm or great company cause it not to be plucked up by the roots. It is very plain from the 17th verse, that by the *mighty arm*, &c. is meant the king of Egypt, whose assistance the Lord foretels should be useless to protect Zedekiah from the Chaldeans, who are in the next verse well compared to a parching wind, which blasts the fruits of the earth, and makes every thing look naked and bare. See Houbigant: who instead of *east wind* in ver. 10. reads *vehement wind*; and instead of *furrows—orders or rows*.

*Ver. 12—14. Is come to Jerusalem]* Came to Jerusalem; and took the king, &c. Ver. 13. *And he took of the king's seed, and struck up a covenant with him, and laid him under an oath; he took also the mighty of the land.* Ver. 14. *That the kingdom might be in a low condition, or, in subjection, and might not lift, &c.*

*Ver.*

army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons :

18 Seeing he despised the oath, by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these *things*, he shall not escape.

19 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD ; *As I live*, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.

20 And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me.

21 And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds :

and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken it.

22 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD ; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it ; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent.

23 In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it : and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar : and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing ; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.

24 And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish : I the LORD have spoken and have done it.

*Ver. 17. Make for him, &c.] Support him in the war, when they, that is to say, the Chaldeans, cast up mounts, and build forts, &c. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 19. Mine oath] That is, given and received in my name. For kings in their covenants swore each by the name of his God, as Jacob and Laban did formerly in mount Gilead.*

*Ver. 20. And will plead with him there] And will judge him there, will be avenged upon, or will reckon with him. Zedekiah was brought to Nebuchadrezzar at Riblah, where he was condemned to lose his eyes. The prophet insinuates here, that Nebuchadrezzar would judge him afresh at Babylon. It is certain that Zedekiah died there.*

*Ver. 22, 23. I will also take, &c.] I will also take of a branch of the high cedar, and I will give out from the top of his young suckers a tender twig : I will crop it off, and will plant it, &c. Ver. 23. In the mountain, &c. And it shall send forth shoots, and give blossoms, and grow up to a good cedar, Houbigant. We have here a striking promise of the restoration and establishment of the kingdom of Judah. The terms in which the prophecy is conceived, agree only with the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. In vain do the Jews pretend to explain them of Zerubbabel, or of the Maccabees: the state of the Jews, under both one and the other, was by no means proportioned to the expressions which we read here. Who ever saw in their person, a cedar planted upon a high mountain, which became fruitful, and shot forth its branches on all sides, stretching itself out in such a manner that the birds came and reposed under its shadow? Nothing of all this corresponds properly to any but Jesus Christ, who collected together in his church, and under his empire, all the birds of heaven ; that is to say, all those who through grace arose above earthly things, and attached themselves to God alone by the profession and possession of Christianity. And why may not this prophecy have a*

reference to the increase of this church and empire to the end of time? See Calmet.

*Ver. 24. I the Lord have brought down] I the Lord bring down the high tree, and exalt the low ; have dried up the green tree, but will make the dry tree flourish ; I the Lord have spoken, and will do it. Many commentators suppose, that this alludes to the debasement of Zedekiah, and the elevation of Jechoniah : but it seems more agreeable to the preceding verses to understand it of the kingdom of Christ ; which by degrees was to be exalted above all the kingdoms of the world, and at length put an end to them, itself continuing unto all eternity. See Dan. ii. 35. 44. vii. 27. Luke, i. 33. 1 Cor. xv. 24.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The riddle and parable which Ezekiel is ordered to put forth to them ; not that God would wrap up in obscure expressions their approaching doom ; but that, engaged by this method of proposing it, they might pay greater attention to the warning.

2. The explication of the riddle to the rebellious house of Judah, that they might not plead ignorance, but be left without excuse.

[1.] The great eagle, is Nebuchadrezzar ; his *great and long wings* represent his vast dominions ; and his coming to Lebanon, his invasion of the land of Judæa. Jechoniah is the *highest branch* cropped by him ; and the top of the young twigs the princes of the land, and the seed-royal, which he carried into captivity to a *land of traffic*, to Babylon, the great mart and seat of the empire. Zedekiah is the *seed of the land*, whom he set with *great circumspection*, as the word signifies, in the fruitful field of Judæa ; having exacted from him an oath of allegiance, and thereupon appointed him king over much people, represented by *great waters* ; having taken the mighty of the land as hostages

## C H A P. XVIII.

*God reproveth the unjust parable of four grapes: he sheweth how he dealeth with the just father, with a wicked son of a just father, with a just son of a wicked father, with a wicked man repenting, with a just man revolting: he defendeth his justice, and exhorteth to repentance.*

[Before Christ 593.]

**T**HE word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,

hostages for his fidelity; that, weakened by their loss, Zedekiah might be the less inclined or able to rebel; and that though the kingdom still remained, it might be base, reduced, and dependent upon the king of Babylon; and by *keeping of his covenant it might stand*, and flourish, though not in its former splendour, yet with comfort, peace, and dignity; as a *vine*, though of a *low stature*, whose branches turned towards Nebuchadnezzar, and the roots spread under him; safe and protected by his power, though subject to his disposal: and in this state it *became a vine, and brought forth branches*. The royal family increased, and for a while the people prospered under Zedekiah's government; and might have grown greater, could they have been content with their station. *Note*; When by the providence of God we are reduced, it is our wisdom, and will be our comfort, to submit, and make the best improvement of our present state; and then we shall find some good arising to us out of the evil.

[2.] The other great eagle, is the king of Egypt, with large and extensive dominions, though not equal to the king of Babylon. To him Zedekiah inclined; and though he was very flourishing in his present state under the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar, yet he could not bear his subjection, and turned his branches, sent his ambassadors to Egypt, in order to obtain infantry and cavalry to support him in the rebellion that he meditated; and to be *watered by the furrows of her plantation*, as Egypt was by the Nile, hoping to be enriched and made great by this alliance with the Egyptians. But they who are discontented with the state that Providence allots them, only plague themselves by fighting against God, and aggravate the miseries under which they are so impatient, as was Zedekiah's case. For,

[3.] God denounces his doom. So far from being watered by Egypt, the vine shall wither in the furrows where it was planted, as a tree blasted by the east wind. It shall be plucked up by the roots, and the fruit cut off; and this *without great power or many people*, any army being sufficient to destroy that nation which God hath devoted to ruin. How can a wretch so perfidious, a covenant-breaker, hope to escape? By an oath God pronounces sentence on the rebellious king, ungrateful to his benefactor who left him a prince, when he might have bound him as a prisoner: false to the oath of God, and faithless to his engagements, God will punish him for his perjury. His Egyptian allies shall help in vain; and, instead of succouring Jerusalem, shall be beaten themselves. Zedekiah's own forces, as cowards, shall flee, unable to stand

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2 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten four grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

3 As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have *occasion* any more to use this proverb in Israel.

4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

in the day of battle; part slain with the sword, and the shattered remains scattered to the four winds. Thus deserted and helpless, he shall be taken in God's snare, delivered a prisoner to the victorious king of Babylon, whose covenant he broke; and die in captive bands in the land of Chaldea, the righteous vengeance due to his crimes: and when this prediction should be fulfilled, then at least he should be made to know that the Lord had spoken it. *Note*; (1.) Oaths are sacred things: they who trifle with them shall bear their judgment. (2.) Sinners will not now believe the threatenings of God against them; but the time will come, when they will be terribly convinced of their truth by fatal experience.

2dly, In the midst of the threatened desolations we have a gracious promise to support the hopes of God's people, who might be ready to fear that the royal line of David would be extinct, and the promise of the Messiah, who was to descend from him, be disappointed.

1. God will raise the tabernacle of David from its ruins out of the *cedar*, the Jewish nation, from the *highest branch*, the royal family of Judah, God will crop off a *tender one*, the Messiah, and *will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent*; in the mount of God in glory, whither the Saviour ascended after his resurrection; or in his church on earth, the spiritual mount Zion; and thence his boughs shall spread, fill the earth with fruit, and afford a safe shelter for fowl of every wing: penitent sinners of all nations shall fly to him, and dwell under his shadow with delight, protected from every evil, and singing among the branches, happy in the experience of his love and favour. Some apply this to Zerubbabel, in whom the house of David revived; but, whatever reference it might have to him, we may venture to affirm, that a greater than Zerubbabel is here.

2. God will be glorified in his work. *All the trees of the field*, the nations of the earth, converted by the preaching of the Gospel, *shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish*; which some interpret of the destruction of the Chaldean monarchy, and the restoration of the Jewish people: others, of the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, who seemed as a withered and dry tree, respecting all spiritual life: and others, more generally, of the destruction of the kingdom of Satan, and the exaltation of the kingdom of Christ, which shall in the latter day spread universally. *I the Lord have spoken, and have done it*; his word being as sure as if it were already accomplished. See the Critical Annotations.

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CHAP.



5 ¶ But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,

6 *And* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman,

7 *And* hath not oppressed any, *but* hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;

8 He *that* hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, *that* hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,

9 Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he *is* just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.

10 ¶ If he beget a son *that is* a robber, a shedder of blood, and *that* doeth the like to any one of these *things*,

11 *And* that doeth not any of those *duties*, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbour's wife,

12 Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination,

13 Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.

14 ¶ Now, lo, *if* he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like,

15 *That* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife,

16 Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, *but* hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment,

17 *That* hath taken off his hand from the poor, *that* hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.

18 *As for* his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did *that* which *is* not good among his people; lo, even he shall die in his iniquity.

19 ¶ Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, *and* hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.

20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

21 ¶ But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all

#### C H A P. XVIII.

*Ver. 2. What mean ye, &c.]* See Jer. xxxi. 28, &c.

*Ver. 4. The soul that sinneth, it shall die]* That is, "all shall be treated equally and without any respect of persons. God will punish or reward according to the good or evil which every one shall have done. The iniquity of the father shall by no means prejudice the righteousness of the son, and the righteousness of the son shall be no justification to the wickedness of the father." Calmet.

*Ver. 6. And hath not eaten, &c.]* Idolatrous worship was generally performed upon the mountains or high places; and eating part of the sacrifice was properly entertaining communion with the idol to whom it was offered. The high places whereof Ezekiel speaks here, were of the most infamous sort, where the grossest idolatries and the vilest prostitutions were committed.

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*Ver. 8. Upon usury.]* See Deut. xxiii. 19, 20: unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; whence it follows, that taking increase is not *malum per se*; but agreeable to justice, if duly circumstanced. Every kind and degree of usury was forbidden to the Israelites among each other, to promote a spirit of mutual kindness. But this law was peculiar to them; like their not reaping the corners of their fields, and their not gleaning their vine-trees and olive-trees. Lev. xix. 9, 10. Deut. xxiv. 19—22.

*Ver. 13. His blood shall be upon him]* "He hath drawn down upon himself the utmost distress by his sin; which can be imputed to no other than himself." The Chaldee renders it, *He is condemned to die.*

*Ver. 19. Yet say ye, &c.]* Do ye say, why doth the son not bear the iniquity of his father?—Because the son doeth that, &c. Therefore he shall surely live. Houbigant.

*Ver.*



my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

22 All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?

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

25 ¶ Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?

26 When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth ini-

quity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.

27 Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

28 Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

29 Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the LORD is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

31 ¶ Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

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*Ver. 26, 27. When a righteous man]* A very false and very dangerous opinion prevailed among the Jews, that at the day of judgment a considerable number of good actions would overbalance men's evil ones. In opposition to this doctrine, God here declares, that a righteous man, sinning and not repenting, should die in his sins; and that the wicked man repenting should certainly *save his soul alive*. See Lowth.

*Ver. 31. Make you a new heart and a new spirit]* The prophets often exhort the Jews to an inward purity and holiness, that they might not rely upon an outward legal righteousness, and a scrupulous exactness in the observance of the ritual parts of the law. By thus instructing them in a more excellent way of serving God than the ceremonial law directly prescribed, they prepared their minds for receiving those truths which would be more fully displayed by the Gospel. Calmet says excellently upon this verse, "We can do nothing well of ourselves; we have of ourselves nothing but sin: all our power comes from God; and with the aid of his grace we can do all things." But if, on the one hand, we ought to humble ourselves on account of our impotency, on the other hand we ought to hope in Him, who giveth to all liberally, and who willeth not our death, but our conversion."

We learn from this useful chapter, that God is perfectly just as well as good, that he never condemns men for any but their own sins, though it sometimes happens that the children are involved in the temporal evils with which God punishes the sins committed by their fathers. How exquisitely gracious the declaration, that God is always ready to pardon, even those who have committed the greatest crimes;

provided they forsake them, embrace the covenant of grace, and for the future keep his commandments! There cannot be a stronger incitement to repentance; the absolute necessity whereof we hence learn, as well as the nature of that repentance to which the promise of pardon is annexed. In a word, the Lord declares, that repentance will then only be effectual, when by grace through faith it produces a new heart and a change of inclinations, accompanied with actual amendment and reformation. See Ostervald's Reflections on the Bible.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The insolent and impious proverb in use among the Jews, *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge*; which implied a charge of injustice and cruelty in God, as if he punished them for the sins of their fathers, and they had themselves done nothing to provoke the wrath under which they lay. It was true indeed, that, as a nation, their fathers' sins came into remembrance; but the insinuation was false, that for them alone they suffered: had they not copied after their forefathers' wickedness, they had never gone into captivity. *Note*; When sinners find fault with God, it is a sure symptom that their heart is yet hardened, and unhumiliated under their sufferings.

2. The reproof which God gives them hereupon. *What mean ye, that ye use this proverb?* with such a blasphemous insinuation. God therefore will silence them; and swears by himself, that they shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb. He will inflict immediate judgment on the sinners, and not defer it to another generation; and will

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32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD : wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye.

make it manifest to themselves and others, that their sufferings are no more than their deserts.

3. He lays down the equitable method of his procedure. He, as the eternal sovereign, indeed, is not bound to give us any account of his matters. *All souls are his*, the work of his hands, accountable to him; and, as in mercy they have received their being from him, they may be assured that he will do them no wrong. He waves, however, his right of sovereignty, and establishes a rule of judgment to which none can reasonably object.

[1.] *The soul that sinneth, it shall die*, be exposed to temporal judgments in this life, and the punishment not be deferred to another generation; and, if he continue impenitent, he shall die eternally, separated from the blissful presence of God, and consigned to the place of torment. Let impenitent sinners hear and tremble.

[2.] *The just man shall live*: and that we may not mistake, God gives his character in several particulars, both negatively and positively. Happy for us will it be, if we can through grace call the character our own. (1.) He is no idolater: neither joins in the worship nor gives the least countenance to the service, hating both the idols and the things sacrificed to them, never deigning to lift his eyes to the one, nor to sit down to feast on the other. (2.) He is no adulterer, nor lewd person. (3.) He is not oppressive; he neither by force nor fraud deprives his neighbour of what is his just due; nor takes advantage of his necessity; but restores to the debtor his pledge when the redemption-money is paid; and, since the law had forbidden him to take usury of his brethren, lending freely, hoping for nothing again. (4.) He is charitable to the extent of his power, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked; willing to give, glad to distribute; and this not as depending on his works as meritorious, but actuated by a principle of love. (5.) He *withdraws his hand from iniquity*; will have no fellowship or connection with wicked men or their deeds; and, if he has been inadvertently drawn into evil, he hastily returns, with grief and shame, to the right way. (6.) In all his dealings, either as a magistrate, a witness, a referee, or a man in business, he pays the strictest regard to truth and justice; and according to his power desires that every man may enjoy his right. (7.) To finish his character; he is not only just and merciful towards man, but pious towards God, *walking in God's statutes*, making them the rule of his conduct; constant in his worship and ordinances, and *keeping God's judgments to deal truly*; never deviating from the line of justice which God has marked out. *He is just*: such a conversation is an evidence to men of that righteousness which by faith he possesses before God. *And he shall surely live, saith the Lord God*, happy in the enjoyment of God's favour, exempted from the plagues which are the portion of the ungodly; and, continuing to the end to walk with God, shall shortly live eternally with him in glory.

2dly, God, having laid down his method of procedure, applies it to particular cases, demonstrating the justice of his dealings, and the injustice of their censures.

1. For the justice of his dealings he observes,

[1.] That an ungodly son, though sprung from a pious father, shall bear his own burden. The case is not uncommon; for grace does not run in the blood, nor is the most careful education always successful; the best of men have, to their grief, beheld the most ungodly children. Dreadful are the sins here supposed; and, indeed, usually they grow most abandoned who sin against the greatest light and warnings. This wicked son is described as the very reverse of all goodness; a *robber*, a murderer, an idolater, an adulterer, an oppressor, an usurer, in short devoted to every abomination; the consequence of which must be, that *he shall not live* in the enjoyment of God's favour, or in peace in his possessions; he shall *surely die*, given up to the sword of the enemy, or led captive, and, if he die impenitent, consigned to the eternal death of body and soul in hell; *his blood shall be upon him*, he has only himself to blame for his destruction, his sins the more aggravated and inexcusable, and his misery the more intolerable, through the abuse of the mercies that he has enjoyed.

[2.] The gracious *son* of a wicked father shall never fare the worse for his descent from him. And a happy thing it is when a child, instead of being influenced by his parents' ill example to imitate it, sees, considers, and takes warning to shun those vices to which they were addicted. His character is the same as described before; for all just men walk by the same rule, and mind the same things; and, being found in the same way, have the same blessed end, *he shall surely live*, and shall not die for his father's iniquity; but his graceless father, whose ways were perverse before God, oppressive, unjust, and negligent of every good work, shall bear his own iniquity, and perish under it.

2. Hence he infers the injustice of their censures. *Yet say ye, Doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father?* No, in no wise. He that doeth *that which is lawful and right, shall surely live*; but *the soul that sinneth, it shall die*, whether father or son: the son shall not be chargeable with his father's iniquity; nor the father, when he has discharged his duty towards him, be answerable for the conduct of his ungodly son. This is the settled rule of God's judgment: *the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him*, the faithful soul shall have the present and eternal comfort of well-doing; *and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him*, crushing him down under temporal judgments, and sinking him at last into the belly of hell.

3dly, The equity of the divine government is here farther demonstrated. As God will not punish one man for the sins of another, neither will he be rigorous to mark the transgressions of those who return to him. The finally impenitent only shall perish.

1. The sinner who repents, and turns to God, shall surely live. Not that of himself by his own natural powers he is able to turn and change his own heart. The work is God's to give repentance: and this he does, [1.] By leading the sinner to *consider his ways*, giving him an en-

lightened

C H A P. XIX.

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

[Before Christ 593.]

**M**OREOVER, take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,

2 And say, What is thy mother? A lioness:

lightened knowledge of the evil and danger of sin, and opening his eyes to a discovery of that guilt to which he was before a stranger; in consequence of which, [2.] He turns from ALL his sins, hating and forsaking them, and makes no allowed reserve of the least sin. [3.] His obedience is sincere and universal, *keeping all God's statutes, and doing that which is lawful and right*, according to his best knowledge of God's word, in simplicity and truth. And, when this is the case, he has, [4.] An assured evidence of his pardon and acceptance with God. *His transgressions shall not only be forgiven, but as it were forgotten, not so much as mentioned unto him.* [5.] *He shall surely live, he shall not die.* He shall be in a great measure exempted from temporal calamities; which blessing seems to have been eminently promised to the pious under the Mosaic dispensation; and, persevering in righteousness and true holiness, he shall have the enjoyment of God's love and favour both here and for ever.

2. God encourages sinners, from the views of his rich grace and mercy, to return to him. *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God.* No: vengeance is his strange work, but mercy is his delight. And though his justice is glorified in the punishment of the obstinately rebellious, yet he would rather glorify his grace in pardoning them, when they return from their ways and live. *Note;* The soul that perishes will have only itself to blame for its damnation.

3. The righteous man who turns apostate, will perish. *If any commit iniquity according to all the abominations of the wicked, joining with them, and in practice like them, shall such live?* No. Their good deeds, however many, will not be mentioned in their favour. They turn back unto perdition, and die in their sins, and for them.

4. God appeals to their consciences for the equity of his ways and the injustice of their reflections. *Yet ye say the way of the Lord is not equal.* Impudently and blasphemously they dared to arraign the divine justice at the bar of their partial self-love; though the procedure was so evidently equal and just: nor could it possibly be otherwise; the judge of all the earth must needs do right. The inequality therefore was in themselves, not in him: he was righteous, but they had done wickedly; his judgments altogether just, their murmuring under them wicked as unreasonable.

4thly, The case being thus fairly stated, God's methods of procedure appear fully vindicated. *I will judge you according to your ways*, giving to every man as his work is. Yet, as their works and ways would so ill bear the severity of his inquiry, he lengthens their day of grace, and gives

she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions.

3 And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men.

4 The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt.

them yet space to repent, and an earnest invitation to engage them thereunto.

1. He invites them to repent and live, *turning from all their transgressions* with shame and rooted aversion, and casting them away, with full purpose of heart never to return to them again. And he calls on them to *make them a new heart and a new spirit*, thoroughly changed in all their tempers and dispositions; which though indeed their duty, yet God must give the power to enable them for what he does command, and he is willing so to do: see chap. xi. 19. and by his grace, preventing and following the word of exhortation, it becomes effectual to the conversion of every sinner who will accept of the offers of mercy.

2. He enforces his invitation with various arguments. [1.] *So iniquity shall not be your ruin*, as otherwise it infallibly would be; for, except we repent we must perish. [2.] God has no delight in the sinner's death, and therefore expostulates, *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* It is as pleasing to him to see the sinner turned from the evil of his ways, as it is unspeakably advantageous to ourselves. They who refuse therefore to give him this satisfaction, sin against their own mercies, and die because they will die. [3.] Immortal life and glory are before us, if we truly turn to God. *Turn yourselves, and live ye.* And what can engage us, if these considerations are ineffectual?

C H A P. XIX.

*Ver. 1. A lamentation for the princes of Israel*] The expression alludes to the mournful songs sung at funerals. This chapter is of that species which Bishop Lowth calls, "Poetical Parables." The style of itself is excellent, and the allegory well sustained. Houbigant, instead of *princes*, would read after the LXX, *the prince*; a reading which the following observations seem to countenance.

*Ver. 2. What is thy mother? a lioness*] Hereby is meant Jerusalem; the *lions* with which she was familiar, are the kings of the nations; the young lions which she produced, are the princes the successors of king Josiah, whose life and disgraces the prophet here points out.

*Ver. 3. And she brought up one of her whelps*] This is meant of *Jebaahaz*, who neglected to follow the good example of his father Josiah, and pursued the evil practices of his wicked predecessors. See his history, 2 Kings, xxiii. 32, 33, &c.

*Ver. 4. The nations also heard of him*] *But when the nations united together against him, he was taken, &c. and brought with a bridle or hook into the land of Egypt.* Houbigant. See Isai. xxxvii. 29. and Vitzinga, vol. ii. p. 329.

*Ver.*

5 Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion.

6 And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men.

7 And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof by the noise of his roaring.

8 Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit.

9 And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.

10 ¶ Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood,

planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters.

11 And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bear rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches.

12 But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them.

13 And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground.

14 And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

*Ver. 5. Then she took another of her whelps]* Hereby is meant Jeconiah, who was placed upon the throne of Jerusalem by the Jews. The character which the prophet here gives of him, agrees perfectly well with him, and with him alone. His cruelty and wickedness are described in ver. 6, 7. 2 Kings, xxiv. 8, 9. and Jer. xxii, &c. His capture and captivity in Babylon are expressed ver. 8, 9, and in the other books of Scripture which we have quoted.

*Ver. 7. And he knew their desolate palaces]* And he destroyed their palaces. Houbigant, with the Chaldee and LXX.

*Ver. 8. In their pit]* The Arabs dig a pit where the lions are observed to enter; and, covering it slightly with reeds or small branches of trees, they frequently decoy and catch them. Pliny has taken notice of the same practice. Shaw, 172. 4to.

*Ver. 9. And they put him in ward, &c.]* And having put a bridle or hook upon him, they cast him into a cave. Houbigant. See on ver. 4.

*Ver. 10. Thy mother is like a vine, &c.]* Thy mother is like a vine, which is planted by the waters. Houbigant. Others read it, Thy mother is like a vine of thy vineyard. We have here a second part of this mournful song, which respects Zedekiah. It is more obscure than the first, possibly because the prophet, speaking of what was future, meant to express himself more darkly. The Scripture frequently compares Judæa and the Jewish people to a vine. See Houbigant and Calmet.

*Ver. 11. And she had strong rods]* Zedekiah had many sons, who were like branches coming forth from the tree whereof the prophet speaks here. This vine exalted and flattered herself with the multitude of her branches; Zedekiah forgot God, and imitated the crimes of Jehoiachim, whom the Scripture reproaches with pride, ambition, cruelty, and injustice. See Jer. xxii. 13, 14, &c. In several

countries they join the vines to trees, about which they wind themselves, and run very high. See Michaelis.

*Ver. 12. But she was plucked up in fury]* Nebuchadrezzar, irritated at the infidelity of Zedekiah, who, without any regard to his covenant, had entered into a league with the king of Egypt, came and besieged Jerusalem, took it, and put to death the sons of Zedekiah in the presence of their father. See 2 Kings, xxv. 6, 7. Thus the vine was torn up, cast to the ground, withered, and consumed in the fire. Fire in the Scripture most commonly denotes war.

*Ver. 13. And now she is planted in the wilderness]* Or in Judæa itself, which is made a wilderness. Houbigant. Other commentators suppose, that the prophet by this expression marks out the state of the Jewish captivity in Babylon. He uses, as is frequent with the prophets, the present tense for the future, to denote the certain accomplishment of the event.

*Ver. 14. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches]* This alludes to Ishmael, who conspired against Gedaliah, and perished not long after; so that no hope remained that any one of the royal blood of David would reign in Judæa. See Jer. xli. 1, &c. and Houbigant. In chap. xvii. the king of Judæa was compared to the highest branch of a cedar; and the king of Babylon to an eagle. With a like decorum, in the two beautiful parables of this chapter Judæa is compared to a lionsess, and her king to a young lion; and the country is again represented under the image of a fruitful, branching, and lofty vine.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The prophet commanded to take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, whose mournful history would afford abundant matter for his grief. *Note.* We should not only weep with those

## C H A P. XX.

*God refuseth to be consulted by the elders of Israel: he sheweth the history of their rebellions in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land: he promiseth to gather them by the Gospel. Under the name of a forest he sheweth the destruction of Jerusalem.*

[Before Christ 592.]

**A**ND it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me.

those that weep, but over those also who never shed a tear for themselves.

2. The Lord directs him what to say. Under the figure of a lioness and her whelps, he describes the kingdom and princes. *The lioness, the mother*, is the tribe of Judah, ravening, fierce, full of rapine and injustice; *she lay down among lions*, joined in affinity with the neighbouring nations, and contracted alliances with them. *She nourished her whelps among young lions*, brought up the young princes in principles of arbitrary power and oppression. Jehoahaz, one of them, *became a young lion*, grown up, and seated on the throne of his father Josiah, *learned to catch the prey, and devoured men*, exercising the most tyrannical sway, and sparing neither the properties nor lives of his subjects, as his covetousness, his rage, or his caprice governed him. *The nations also heard of him*, what oppression he used towards his people, and what designs he was forming to subdue his neighbours; and hereupon the Egyptians fell upon him, vanquished and led him away a prisoner into Egypt, where he died.

Despairing of his return, the Jewish people advanced Jehoiakim to the throne, with the consent of Pharaoh, and he trod in the wicked steps of his predecessor, alike ravenous, arbitrary, and oppressive. *He learned to catch the prey, he devoured men*, plundering his subjects, and sacrificing their lives to his resentment. *And he knew their desolate palaces*, ransacking them to discover the treasures concealed therein; and by his tyranny he drove his subjects from their cities, and made the land desolate through his roaring, neither their lives nor properties being any longer safe. The nations hereupon collected under Nebuchadnezzar, surrounded him as a beast with toils, and he was taken prisoner as a lion in a pit; they bound him in chains, and cast him into prison, where probably he quickly died, and was thrown on a dunghill, see Jer. xxii. 18, 19, and his roaring was silenced, no more the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

2dly, The same persons, compared before to a lioness and her whelps, are here likened to a vine and its branches.

1. *Thy mother*, the Jewish nation, *is like a vine in thy blood*, which, laid at the root, is said to contribute to its fertility; *planted by the waters*, enjoying the greatest advantages and privileges; *she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters*, grew rich and populous; and *she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bear rule*, many

2 Then came the word of the LORD unto me, saying,

3 Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye come to inquire of me? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you.

4 ¶ Wilt thou judge them, son of man; wilt thou judge *them*? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers:

5 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord

princes sprung from her, whose dignity was great; or the royal family was numerous, either of Josiah or Zedekiah, to whom it may be referred; and *her stature was exalted among the thick branches*, the nation of the Jews was eminent and distinguished; and *appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches*, particularly in the glorious days of David and Solomon, when they were the admiration of the nations around them. But,

2. This vine was plucked up in fury. Having long provoked God by their sins, and Zedekiah by his rebellion filling up the measure of their iniquities, the country was utterly laid waste by the Chaldean army; *the strong rods broken, withered, burnt*; the king, princes, magistrates, slain or made captives. *And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground*, carried to Babylon, where they suffered hard servitude: or this respects the remnant left in Judea, which by the ravages of the Chaldean army had been turned into a desert. *And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches*: the rod is Zedekiah, and his rebellion the fire which hath devoured her fruit, the people perishing by the famine, pestilence, and sword, during the siege of Jerusalem; so that *she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule*, Zedekiah being the last king of the house of David, till the Messiah came. *This is a lamentation and shall be for a lamentation*: the past desolations were grievous; but, instead of coming to an end, succeeding generations would have fresh cause to bemoan their miseries.

## C H A P. XX.

*Ver. 1. It came to pass in the seventh year*] That is, from the captivity of Jeconiah: see chap. viii. 1. The occasion of the prophecy in the present chapter was this. The Jews, by certain of their elders, had, as was usual in their distresses, recourse to the God of Israel for direction and assistance. On this, we are informed, ver. 3. that the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, commanding him to tell the elders, that God would not be inquired of by them; for that their continued rebellions, from their coming out of Egypt to that time, had made them unworthy of his patronage and protection. Their idolatries are then recapitulated, and divided into three periods: the first, from God's message to them in Egypt to their entrance into the Promised Land; the second period contains all the time from their taking possession of the land of Canaan, to their immediate condition when this prophecy was delivered; the third period concerns the iniquities and the

GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I *am* the LORD your God;

6 In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt, into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands:

the consequent punishment of the present generation, which had now applied to him in their distresses. See Div. Leg. vol. iii. and Calmet.

*Ver. 4. Wilt thou judge them, &c.?* *Wilt thou not judge them, &c.?* Lowth. *Make thyself, son of man, make thyself their judge: declare to them the abominations, &c.* Houbigant. This whole chapter is a kind of decree; in which the prophet, after having set forth the crimes of the Jews, pronounces against them their rejection, and the things which God will do to a faithful people, who shall serve him truly on his holy mountain. See ver. 40. and Calmet.

*Ver. 5. When I lifted up mine hand]* *Lifting up the hand,* was a ceremony used in taking an oath: the meaning here is, "When I entered into a solemn covenant with them, pursuant to the oath I had sworn to their fathers." But Houbigant is of opinion, that *lifting up the hand,* in this place, means the giving them help and deliverance. See his note. The 15th and 23d verses, however, seem to confirm the first explication. Among the Jews, the juror held up his right hand towards heaven; which explains a passage in the 144th Psalm, ver. 8. *whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* The same form is retained in some parts of Scotland still. See Paley on Moral and Political Philosophy, p. 159. 4to. This manner of taking an oath is allowed by law to a certain description of protestant dissenters in Ireland called Seceders. 21 & 22 Geo. 3. c. lvii.

*Ver. 6. Flowing with milk and honey]* Bochart, Hier. p. ii. lib. iv. c. xii. 520. observes, that this phrase occurs about twenty times in the Scriptures; and that it is an image frequently used in the classics.

*The glory of all lands]* The construction of this expression may be, "This [circumstance of flowing with milk and honey] is a glory to all lands." But the rendering of Vitranga, "*Quæ est egregia inter omnes terras,*" is a probable one, and founded in truth. "That land is the glory." Secker. "*Julæe uber solum. Exuberant fruges nostrum ad morem.*" Tac. Hist. v. sec. 6. Commentators understand *fruges* of corn, wine, and olives. "*Non minor læci ejus apricitatis quam ubertatis admiratio est,*" says Justin of the valley of Jericho, lib. xxxvi. c. iii. Josephus represents Galilee as wholly under culture, and every where fruitful; as throughout abounding in pastures, planted with all kinds of trees, and inciting by the good quality of the land those who are least disposed to the labour

7 Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.

8 But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

of tillage. He describes Perea as for the most part barren and rough, and too churlish for the growth of cultivated fruits: but adds that, where there is soil, it bears every thing; that the plains are planted with various trees; and that it is chiefly prepared for the produce of the olive, the vine, and the palm-tree. He observes, that the nature of Samaria differs in nothing from that of Judæa, that both have mountains and plains, have soil for agriculture, bear much, are planted with trees, and are full of wild and of cultivated fruits. Bel. Jud. lib. iii. c. iii. Again, B. J. lib. vi. c. i. sec. 1. we find, that when the Romans besieged Jerusalem, they laid bare a country round about that city ninety stadia in circuit, which had been before adorned with trees and gardens. See Numb. xiii. 27. Deut. viii. 7, 8, 9. 1 Kings, v. 11. 2 Kings, xviii. 32. Pietro della Valle in Shaw's Travels, 4to. p. 337. That the mountains were cultivated is plain. See Psal. lxxii. 16. Isai. v. 1. vii. 25.

*Juvat Ismara Baccho  
Conserere, atque olea magnum vestire Taburnum.*

VIRG. G. ii. 37.

For open Ismarus will Bacchus please;  
Taburnus loves the shade of olive-trees.

DRYDEN.

"We were drawn up the Rhine by horses. The grapes grow on the brant rocks so wonderfully, that ye will marvel how men dare climb up to them; and yet so plentifully, that it is not only a marvel where men be found to labour it, but also where men dwell that drink it." Ascham's Letters, 4<sup>o</sup>. p. 372. How some of the mountains were cultivated we learn from Maundrell. "Their manner was, to gather up the stones, and place them in several lines along the sides of the hills, in the form of a wall. By such borders they supported the mould from tumbling, or being washed down; and formed many beds of excellent soil, rising gradually one above another from the bottom to the top of the mountains. Of this form of culture you see evident footsteps, wherever you go in all the mountains of Palestine." P. 65. 8vo. Oxford. 1740.

*Ver. 8. I said, I will pour out my fury]* *I thought to pour out, &c.* and so ver. 13 and 21. We do not read in the book of Exodus, that the Israelites worshipped the idols of Egypt. It is only collected from that book, that they were idolaters in Egypt, because they were so prone to idolatry in the wilderness, in the very midst of God's miracles.

But

9 But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they *were*, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

10 Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness.

11 And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them.

12 Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I *am* the LORD that sanctify them.

13 ¶ But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.

14 But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out.

15 Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given *them*, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands;

16 Because they despised my judgments,

and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.

17 Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness.

18 But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols:

19 I *am* the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them;

20 And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I *am* the LORD your God.

21 Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness.

22 Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth.

23 I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries;

24 Because they had not executed my

But from the manner in which the prophet here upbraids them, we learn that the history of the Israelites is written very compendiously in the books of Moses; and that we may very properly supply some things in the sacred history, in order to explain difficult places, so long as we are led by the hand as it were, and authorized by the sacred writers. See Houbigant.

*Ver. 9. But I wrought for my name's sake*] This in other parts of Scripture is assigned as the reason why God did not punish the Israelites as they deserved; namely, because it would turn to the dishonour of the Almighty in the judgment of the heathen world, as if he was not able to make good the gracious promises which he had given them. We see throughout the whole Scripture this jealousy, this zeal in the Lord to preserve the honour of his name, and to put to silence the insults and reproaches of unbelievers. See Calmet, and Lowth.

*Ver. 11, 12. I gave them my statutes*] That is, says Bishop Warburton, he gave them the moral law of the decalogue, in which there was one positive institution, and no more; but this one absolutely necessary to preserve them a select people

unmixed with the nations. By the word שבתותי *shabbetotai*, my sabbaths, says Houbigant, are understood those other solemnities, which, no less than the sabbaths strictly speaking, were a sign whereby God was known to be the God of Israel.

*Ver. 18—20. Walk ye not, &c.] Walk ye not in the customs of your fathers, nor pursue their manners, &c.* Here we see that the children or progeny were again offered, as their sole rule of government what had been given to, and violated by their fathers; namely, the moral law of the decalogue, and the positive institution of the sabbath.

*Ver. 21. Which if a man do, he shall even live in them*] These statutes were therefore good ones. But they had been scattered among the heathen, and dispersed through the countries, because, as God complains, they had not executed his judgments, but despised his sabbaths; he adds, therefore, *ver. 25. Wherefore*, namely because of their disobedience, I gave them statutes which were not good, that is to say, did not eventually prove of that advantage and benefit to them which they otherwise would have done; and judgments (as it should be rendered) which they will not live by; that is to say, by a due observance of which they will not secure

O o their



judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols.

25 Wherefore I gave them also statutes *that were not good*, and judgments whereby they should not live ;

their own prosperity and safety. See Rom. vii. 10. and Chandler's Life of David, vol. i. p. 2.

Ver. 23. *That I would scatter them, &c.*] We do not read in the history of the Israelites in the wilderness, that they were scattered through the countries by their God, when enraged against them. But what Ezekiel here supplies in the history is easily collected from God's desertion of the Israelites when they were disobedient and rebellious : for thus he delivered them to the Amalekites. Thus also the neighbouring Arabs might carry off many of them captives ; and thus also all the neighbouring people might attack and distress them with war. See Houbigant.

Ver. 25. *I gave them also statutes that were not good*] This passage has given great handle to infidels and free-thinkers, though certainly it will admit of more interpretations than one, clear and consistent, and sufficient to remove every objection. I will subjoin two ; the first espoused by Dr. Waterland and Vitringa ; the second by Spencer, Bishop Warburton, and others ; leaving the decision to the reader's judgment. I. God intends not here his own statutes or judgments, but the idolatrous and corrupt principles and practices of the heathens, to which he sometimes abandoned the Israelites, because they had first deserted him. That this is the genuine sense of the text, may be made appear as follows. 1. It is observable, that God here describes these statutes and judgments by characters directly opposite to what he gives of his own. In ver. 11, 13, 21. he says, *I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments ; which if a man do, he shall even live in them ;* characters conformable to what he had given in Levit. xviii. 4, 5. where he says, *Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances to walk therein ; I am the Lord your God : ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments ; which if a man do, he shall live in them :* (Compare Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 12.) which is plainly to be understood of the whole system of the Jewish laws ; to the keeping of which life was promised, as to the breach of any of them a curse was annexed. See Deut. xxvii. 26. Gal. iii. 10. The character then of God's laws, ritual as well as others, was, *that a man shall live in them.* But in the verse before us, God says, *I gave them also statutes [not my statutes] and judgments [not my judgments] whereby they should not live ;* directly contrary to what he had before said both here and in Leviticus, of his *own* statutes at large. So that it is highly unreasonable, or rather absurd, to understand both of God's own statutes. 2. In ver. 11. God had spoken of giving his own laws to his people ; and ver. 13. he proceeds to speak of their frowardness, and contemning those his laws, and of his forbearance with them in the wilderness notwithstanding. But at length, in punishment to them, he did what he mentions in the verse before us. So that these statutes cannot be the same with those laws of Moses given before, but must be different. 3. God immediately adds, ver. 26. *And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire (to be sacrificed, or consecrated in fire to Moloch) all that openeth the*

womb, that I might make them desolate. This may be sufficient to intimate what kind of statutes and judgments God is here speaking of ; namely, the rites and practices of the heathen, whereby he polluted them, that is, gave them up to their own heart's lusts, to defile and pollute themselves : wherefore it is said, ver. 31. *When ye offer your gifts, &c. ye pollute yourselves, &c.* The Israelites had provoked God many ways, and more especially by their frequent idolatries ; and therefore God gave them up to the vilest and most deplorable idolatry, namely, that of *sacrificing their sons and daughters to devils*, offering them up as burnt-offerings to Moloch. These were the statutes *not good* ; that is to say, *the worst that could be*, for such is the force of that expression according to the Hebrew idiom. It is said moreover, ver. 18. *Walk not in the statutes of your fathers, &c.* Here we have mention of statutes and judgments by the same words in the Hebrew as in the present verse ; not meaning, however, *God's* statutes or judgments, but the corrupt customs of their idolatrous ancestors ; such as God permitted, or gave them up to, because they chose such, as is here intimated. The original word נָטָן *natan*, is frequently used in the permissive sense ; and therefore *I gave them*, may amount to no more than, *I suffered* such things. See Poole's Annotations. 4. St. Stephen, Acts, vii. 42. seems to have been the best interpreter of the text before us, who says, *God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, &c.* This was giving them up to *statutes that were not good*, and to *judgments whereby they should not live ; to the corrupt customs and impure rites of the heathen.* To confirm this, we may observe, that God, by the prophet Jeremiah, (chap. xvi. 13. compare Deut. iv. 27, 28. xxviii. 36, 37.) threatens the like judgments to his offending people : and in like manner of Ezekiel in the 30th verse of this very chapter. The Chaldee paraphrast interprets the text before us thus ; *I cast them out, and delivered them into the hand of their enemies ; and they went after their own foolish lusts, and made statutes which were not right, and laws by which you shall not live.* See Waterland's Scripture Vindicated, part iii. p. 104. &c. and Vitringa, Observ. Sacr. lib. ii. cap. 1. — II. Bishop Warburton's interpretation is as follows. Their fathers, says he, left their bones in the wilderness ; but this perverse race, being pardoned as a people, and still possessed of the privilege of a select and chosen nation, were neither to be scattered among the heathen, nor to be confined for ever in the wilderness. Almighty wisdom, therefore, ordained that their punishment should be such as should continue them, even against their wills, a separated race in possession of the land of Canaan ; a punishment declared by these words, *Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, &c.* that is to say, "Because they had violated my first system of laws, the decalogue, I added to them, [*I gave them also*, words which imply the giving as a supplement] my second system, the ritual law ; very aptly characterized (when set in opposition to the moral law) by *statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live.*" What is here observed opens to us the admirable reasons

26 And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through *the fire* all that openeth the womb, that I might make

them desolate, to the end that they might know that I *am* the LORD.

27 ¶ Therefore, son of man, speak unto the

of both punishments, and why there was a forbearance, or a second trial, before the *yoke of ordinances* was imposed: for we must never forget, that the God of Israel transacted with his people according to the mode of human governors. Let this be kept in mind, and we shall see the admirable progress of the dispensation. God brought the *fathers* out of Egypt, to put them in possession of the land of Canaan. He gave them the *moral law*, to distinguish them for the worshippers of the true God; and he gave them the *positive law* of the sabbath, to distinguish them for God's peculiar people. These *fathers* proving perverse and rebellious, their punishment was death in the wilderness, and exclusion from that good land which was reserved for their *children*. But then these *children* in that very wilderness, the scene of the fathers' crime and calamity, fell into the same transgressions. What was now to be done? It was plain, that so inveterate an evil could be only checked or subdued by the curb of some severe institution. A severe institution was prepared, and the *ritual law* was established. For the first offence the punishment was *personal*; but when a repetition shewed it to be inbred, and, like the leprosy, sticking to the whole race, the punishment was properly changed to *national*. How clear! How coherent is every thing, as here explained! How consonant to reason! How full of divine wisdom! Yet we are told by the Rabbens, who hold the perfection and eternal obligation of their law, that the *statutes not good*, were the tributes imposed on the Israelites while in subjection to their pagan neighbours. And Christian writers, who did not attend to the subtilty of this explication, have pretended that the *statutes given*, which were *not good*, were pagan idolatries, not *given*, but *suffered*; indeed not *suffered*; because severely, and almost always immediately punished. But the absurdity of this supposition is best exposed by the prophet himself, as his words lie in the text. God's first intention with respect to these rebels, is represented to be the renouncing them for his people, and scattering them among the nations; ver. 21. But his mercy prevails; ver. 22. In these two verses we see, that the punishment intended, and the mercy shewn, are delivered in general, without the circumstances of the punishment, or the conditions of the mercy. The three next verses, in the mode of eastern composition, which delights in repetition, inform us more particularly of these circumstances, which were *dispersion*, &c. and of these conditions, which were the imposition of a *ritual law*, &c. The intended punishment is explained specifically, that is, with its circumstances; the mercy follows, and the terms on which it was bestowed are likewise explained. Whatever is meant by *statutes not good*, the end of giving them, we see, was, to preserve the Israelites a peculiar people of the Lord; for the punishment of dispersion was remitted to them. But if by *statutes not good*, be meant the permitting them to fall into idolatries, God is absurdly represented as decreeing an *end*—the keeping of his people separate—and at the same time providing *means* to defeat it; for every lapse into idolatry was a step to their dis-

persion, and *utter consumption*, by absorbing them into the nations. We must needs conclude therefore, that by *statutes not good*, is meant the *ritual law*; the only means of attaining that end of mercy; the preserving them a separate people. See Div. Leg. vol. iii. book iv. p. 394, &c.

Ver. 26. And I polluted them, &c.] The common interpretation, says Bishop Warburton, is this: "I permitted them to fall into that wicked inhumanity, whereby they were polluted and contaminated, in making their children pass through the fire to Moloch, in order to root them out, and utterly destroy them." But this explanation hath already been exposed in the note on the preceding verse; and there is another, which so exactly quadrates with the sense given to that verse, that it completes the narrative. To understand then what this formidable text aims at, we must consider the context as it has been explained above. The 21st and 22d verses contain God's purposes of *judgment* and of *mercy* in general. The 23d, 24th, and 25th explain in what the intended *judgment* would have consisted, and how the prevailing *mercy* was qualified. The Israelites were to be pardoned [as a nation], but to be kept under by the yoke of a ritual law described only in general by the title of *Statutes not good*. The 26th verse opens the matter still farther, and explains the nature and genius of that yoke, together with its effects, both salutary and baleful: the *salutary*, as it was a barrier to idolatry, the most enormous part of which was that whereof he gives a specimen, "the causing their children to pass through the fire to Moloch;" the *baleful*, as it brought on their desolation when they became deprived of the temple-worship. But to be more particular,—I polluted them in their own gifts: by gifts we may understand that homage (universally expressed in the ancient world by rites of sacrifice) which a people owed to their God. And how were these gifts polluted? By a multifarious ritual, which, being opposed to the idolatries of the nations, was prescribed in reference to those idolatries; and consequently was incumbered with a thousand ceremonies respecting the choice of the animal; the qualities and purifications of the sacrificers; and the direction and efficacy of each specific offering. This account of their pollution by such a ritual, exactly answers to the character given of that ritual [*statutes not good*, &c.] in the verse before. Then follows the reason of God's thus polluting them in their own gifts—in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb; that is, the polluting ritual was imposed as a punishment for, as well as a barrier to their idolatries, characterised under this most enormous and horrid of them all, the causing of their children to pass through the fire to Moloch. Then follows the humiliating circumstance of this ritual yoke;—that I might make them desolate; that is to say, that they should, even when they most wanted it, be deprived of their most solemn means of intercourse with their God and King. A real state of desolation! To understand which, we are to consider, that at the time this prophecy was delivered, the Jews, by their accumulated iniquities, were accelerating their

house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me.

28 For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink-offerings.

29 Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? and the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day.

30 ¶ Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations?

31 For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the

their punishment of the seventy years' captivity; which doubtless the prophet had in his eye. Now, by the peculiar constitution of the ritual law, their religion was become, as it were, local: all sacrifices being to be offered in Jerusalem: so that when they were led captive into a foreign land, the most solemn means of intercourse at that time between God and man, *the morning and evening sacrifice*, was entirely cut off: and thus, by means of the ritual law, they were emphatically said to be *made desolate*. The verse concludes with telling us for what end this punishment was inflicted,—*That they might know that I am the Lord*. How would this appear from the premises? very evidently. For if, while they were in captivity, they were under an interdict, and their religion in a state of suspension, and yet they were to continue God's select people, (for the scope of the whole prophecy is to shew, that notwithstanding all these provocations, God still worked for his name's sake,) then, in order to be restored to their religion, they were to be restored to their own land; which work prophecy always describes as one of the greatest manifestations of God's power; their redemption from the Assyrian captivity particularly, being frequently compared by the prophets to that of the Egyptian. From hence, therefore, all men might know and collect, that the God of Israel was the Lord. This famous text then may be thus aptly paraphrased, "And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord:" that is to say, I loaded the religious worship due to me as their God, with a number of operose ceremonies, to punish their past, and to oppose their future idolatries; the most abominable of which was, their making their children to pass through the fire to Moloch. And farther, that I might have the ceremonial law always at hand, as an instrument of still more severe punishments, when the full measure of their iniquities should bring them into captivity in a strange land, I so contrived by the constitution of their religion, that it should then remain under an interdict, and all stated intercourse be cut off between me and them; from which evil would necessarily arise this advantage,—an occasion to manifest my power to the Gentiles, in bringing my people again, after a fixed time of punishment, into their own land. Here we see the text, thus interpreted, connects and completes the whole relation, concerning the imposition

of the ritual law, and its nature and consequences, from ver. 21. to 26. inclusively; and opens the history of it by due degrees, which those just and elegant compositions require. We are first informed of the threatened judgment, and of the prevailing mercy in general: we are then told the specific nature of that judgment, and the circumstance attending the accorded mercy: and lastly, the prophet explains the nature and genius of that attendant circumstance, together with its adverse, as well as benignant effects. See Div. Leg. vol. iii. p. 401.

Ver. 27—31. *Son of man, speak unto the house of Israel*] This prophecy hitherto contains a declaration of the various punishments inflicted on the rebellious Israelites, from the time of Moses's mission to the preaching of Ezekiel. We have shewn, that their punishment in the first period was *death in the wilderness*; their punishment in the second period was the *fastening on their necks the yoke of the ritual law*. The punishment in the third period is now to be considered; and we shall see, that it consisted in the rendering of the yoke of the ritual law still more galling, by withdrawing from them the *extraordinary providence*, which once rewarded the studious observers of it with many temporal blessings. The punishment was dreadful; and such indeed the prophet describes it to have been. But we may be assured that their crimes had risen in proportion; and this likewise, he tells us, was the case. Verses 27, 28. begin with a description of their manners when they had taken possession of the land of Canaan: and such was their continual practice, even till the delivery of this prophecy; at which time their enormities were come to such a height, that they contrived in their hearts to renounce the God of Israel altogether: but being surrounded with calamities, and a powerful enemy at the door, they were willing to procure a present relief from him whom they had so much offended, and at this moment were projecting to offend still more. The singular impudence of this conduct will appear to have been the instant occasion of this famous prophecy. Verses 30 and 31. when joined with those that immediately follow, will convince us, that this recourse to the God of their fathers was only a momentary fit, arising from their pressing necessities. Div. Leg. vol. iii. book iv. p. 405, &c. Instead of *blasphemed me*, we may read, *dishonoured, or affronted me*.

Ver. 29. *Then I said unto them*] *And though I said unto them,*

Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you.

32 And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.

33 ¶ As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you :

34 And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out.

35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.

36 Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD.

37 And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant :

38 And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me : I will bring them forth out of the country

where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel : and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD ; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter *also*, if ye will not hearken unto me : but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.

40 For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me : there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things.

41 I will accept you with your sweet favour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered ; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.

42 And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country *for* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers.

43 And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been

them, *What is the high place in which you assemble? yet the high place retained its name even to this day.* Houbigant.

Ver. 32—37. *And that which cometh into your mind*] By all this it appears, that this rebellious people were not anxious to avoid their approaching captivity, denounced and threatened by all the prophets. What they wanted was, a light and easy servitude, which might enable them to mingle with, and at last to be lost among the nations ; like the ten tribes which had gone before them. Against the vileness of these hopes is this part of the prophecy directed. God assures them, that he will bring them out of the Assyrian captivity, as he had done out of the Egyptian ; but not in mercy, as was that deliverance, but in judgment, and *with fury poured out* : and as he had brought their fathers into the *wilderness of the land of Egypt*, so would he bring them into the *wilderness of the people*, that is, the land of Canaan, which, they would find on their return to it, was become desert and uninhabited, and therefore elegantly called the *wilderness of the people*. But what now was to be their reception, on their second possession of the Promised Land ? A very different welcome from the first. God, indeed, leads them here again with a *mighty hand*, and a *stretched-out arm* ; and it was to take possession ; but not, as at first, of a land flowing with milk and honey, but of a prison, a house of correction, where they were to pass under the rod, and to remain in bonds. *I will cause you,*

says God, ver. 37. *to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant* : words, which strongly and elegantly express subjection to a ritual law, after the extraordinary providence which so much alleviated the yoke of it was withdrawn ; and we find it withdrawn soon after their return from the captivity. See Div. Leg. as before.

Ver. 38. *And I will purge out, &c.*] The prophet carries on the comparison of the Egyptian deliverance. These *rebels*, like their *fathers in the wilderness*, were indeed to be brought out of captivity, but were never to enjoy the Promised Land ; and the rest, like the *children in the wilderness*, were to have the yoke of the ritual law made still more galling : and thus the *comparison* is completed. These were the three different punishments inflicted in these different periods : the first *personal* ; the second and the third *national* ; only the third made heavier than the second, in proportion to their accumulated offences. Div. Leg.

Ver. 39. *Go ye, serve ye, &c.*] *Go ye, and take away every one his idols ; and if ye will not hereafter hearken unto me, certainly ye shall pollute my holy name no more, &c.* Houbigant, who, instead of, *All the house of Israel, all of them in the land*, in the next verse, reads, *All the house of Israel from all lands.*

Ver. 39—43. *As for you, O house of Israel*] As, in the height of God's vengeance on the sins of this rebellious people, the distant prospect always terminated in mercy ;

defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed.

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

45 ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

46 Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop *thy word* toward the south, and

prophecy against the forest of the south field;

47 And say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein.

48 And all flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it: it shall not be quenched.

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

so, with a mercy, and a promise of better times, the whole of this prophetic scene is closed; in order that those to whom it is addressed should, however criminal, not be left in an utter state of desperation, but be afforded some shadow of repose in the prospect of future peace and tranquillity. For now, turning again to these *temporary inquiries* after God, the prophet addresses them, *As for you, O house of Israel, &c.* as much as to say, "Go on no longer in this divided worship; halt no more between two opinions: if Baal be your God, serve him; if the God of Israel, then serve him only." The reason follows, ver. 40—43. *For in my holy mountain, &c.* that is, "For then, a new order of things shall commence. My people, after their return from the captivity, shall be as averse to idolatry, as till then they were prone to it; and the memory of their former follies shall make them loath *themselves in their own sight.*" But the prophecy, I doubt not, has also a reference to the final restoration of the Jews as a preparation for the universal reign of Christ.

Ver. 44. *And ye shall know, &c.*] The idea of *mercy* is naturally attached to that of repentance and reformation; and with mercy the prophecy concludes. The reader hath now a comment on the whole prophecy, whereby he may understand how justly it hath acquired its eminent celebrity: its general subject being no less than the fate and fortunes of the Jewish republic; of which the several parts are so important, so judiciously chosen, so elegantly disposed, and so nobly enounced, that we see the divinity of the original in every step we make. Div. Leg. vol. iii. p. 410.

Ver. 45. *Moreover, the word of the Lord*] Houbigant, following many learned commentators, begins the 21st chapter very properly with this verse; for what is contained in that chapter is only an explanation of what is included in the remainder of this. *The south*, in the next verse, and *the forest of the south field*, mean Judæa; because they who went from Babylon, where Ezekiel now prophesied, into Judæa, went southward, and entered by the forest of Lebanon into Judæa. See ver. 2. of the next chapter, and Houbigant.

Ver. 47. *All faces from the south to the north, &c.*] "From the south of Judæa to the north, shall be seen nothing but faces, burnt, dried up, pale; melancholy through fear, famine, grief, and despair." Isaiah makes use of a similar expression in describing the horrors of wars; *Their faces shall be as flames.* See ch. xiii. 8. Lam. iv. 8. v. 10.

Joel, ii. 6. and Calmet. Upon receiving this message from God, the prophet observes, that the people were ready to say, *he spoke parables*, ver. 49. Whether this declaration of God was really as hard to be understood by them as a parable, I shall not take upon me to say; but D'Herbelot, in his *Bibliothèque Orientale*, has given us a passage of a Persian poet describing the desolation made by a pestilence, the terms whereof very much resemble the words of the prophet:—

"The pestilence, like an avenging fire, ruins at once this beautiful city, whose territory gives an odour surpassing that of the most excellent perfumes."

"Of all its inhabitants there remains neither a young man nor an old."

"This was a lightning that, falling upon a forest, consumed there the green wood with the dry."

So the *pestilence* and *coals of fire* are mentioned together by the prophet Habakkuk, chap. iii. 5. *Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.* See *Observations*, p. 324.

Ver. 49. *Doth he not speak parables?*] Though these prophecies were clear enough, if they would have given themselves the trouble to have considered and compared them with the state of things; yet, as the understanding of them would have obliged the people to a change of conduct, the source of their obscurity is very discernible therein. It was hence that the Jews, dazzled with the evidence of what Jesus said to them, and surpris'd with the splendour of his miracles, demanded of him with importunity, and with a spirit of malice, that he would tell them plainly who he was; as if his doctrine and his actions did not sufficiently declare it. *How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.* John, x. 24. See Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The date of this prophecy is in the seventh year of Jeconiah's captivity and Zedekiah's reign, the fifth month, the tenth day; and it was delivered on occasion of the elders of Israel, whether of the captivity or from Jerusalem, coming to consult the prophet, as some suppose, whether they might not, to ingratiate themselves with their heathen masters, conform to their heathen worship: certain it is, that whatever was the cause of their coming, their hearts were hypocritical, and the answer of God to them is full of wrath.

I. God

## C H A P. XXI.

*Ezekiel prophesieth against Jerusalem with a sign of sighing. The sharp and bright sword, against Jerusalem, against the kingdom, and against the Ammonites.*

[Before Christ 592.]

**A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

1. God refuses to be required of by them; for they who draw near to God hypocritically, can expect no mercy at his hands; their very prayers will be turned into sin.

2. The prophet must arraign and condemn them; no more their advocate, but their accuser, and now constituted their judge to pronounce sentence upon them for all their own and their fathers' abominations.

3dly, God begins to recapitulate the provocations of Israel; and they commenced from the day when he began to form them into a people.

1. He reminds them of the wonders of his grace shewn to them above all nations. He *chose* them for a peculiar people, in the time of their deepest affliction, and most abject wretchedness, *in the land of Egypt; he made himself known unto them*, by his name **JEHOVAH**, and by the miracles that he wrought for their deliverance; confirming his favour towards them by an oath, and assuring them of the inheritance that he had provided for them in a land *flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands, which he espied for them*, singled out with peculiar care, as the happy spot appointed for their abode. *Note*; None truly know God, but those in whom he is revealed.

2. The commands that he gave them were most reasonable and easy. They were enjoined to *cast away every man the abominations of his eyes, and not defile themselves with the idols of Egypt*. And this he enforces with the most cogent reason, *I am the Lord your God*, the only worthy object of worship, and to whom they were bound by unnumbered obligations.

3. They notwithstanding wilfully rebelled, and refused to hearken to God's commands, continuing in their abominations, and cleaving to the idols of Egypt; not deterred by all the plagues which they beheld.

4. By his prophets he threatened to destroy them with the Egyptians. As they had joined in their idolatry, they deserved to share their ruin. But,

5. For his name's sake he wrought, that the heathen might not blaspheme, as if he was unfaithful to his promises, or unable to accomplish them.

3dly, The mercies of God, and the ingratitude and disobedience of the Jewish people, are displayed.

1. God's mercies toward them were amazingly great and singular. He brought them forth from Egypt with a high hand; led them into the wilderness, where they lived by daily miracles; and gave them his law, with the statutes and judgments of his worship, by the observance of which they might expect to live long, and enjoy the promised inheritance: he gave them also his sabbaths, the weekly sabbath, and the sabbatical and jubilee years, signs of his favour towards them, memorials of their deliverance from

2 Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel,

3 And say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked.

Egypt, pledges of their entrance into the rest of Canaan, and figures of the eternal rest which remains for the faithful in a better world: thus God distinguished them from all nations, and intended to make *them know that he their Lord sanctified them*; these holy days appointed for his immediate service, having then, as they still have, the most blessed influence upon the souls of those, who conscientiously sanctify their sabbaths to keep them holy.

2. Their ingratitude and undutifulness were most provoking. *In the wilderness*, where they were surrounded with mercies and miracles, *they rebelled*, cast off God's government, despised his ordinances, polluted his sabbaths, and sunk into idolatry.

3. Offended with such baseness, God threatened utterly to consume them in his fury. But for his own glory, that the heathen might not dishonour his name, as if he was unable to bring his people into the land of Canaan, he resolved to fulfil his promise: yet, not to leave such wickedness without a mark of his severe displeasure, he swore in his wrath concerning the men of that generation, that they should never enter into his rest; and, in consequence thereof, their carcases fell in the wilderness. Let us therefore fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should come short of it, and perish after the same example of unbelief and disobedience.

4. God did not make an utter end of them, but spared their children, and solemnly warned them, by their fathers' ruin, against their sins, not to walk *in their statutes*, or copy their worship or manners, but to flee from idolatry, to know the Lord to be their God, to worship him according to his own prescription, observant of his sabbaths, and obedient to his laws. *Note*; Children should take warning by their parents' ill example, and be peculiarly careful to abstain from their sins.

5. *They notwithstanding rebelled against God*, and trod in the steps of their ungodly fathers; sabbath-breakers, disobedient, idolaters; rejecting their own mercies, they provoked that wrath which would have destroyed them, had not God for his own glory restrained his arm, after making them feel some heavy strokes of his displeasure in the wilderness. And though, according to his promise, he brought them into the land of Canaan, he foretold the fearful dispersion to which at last they would be doomed for their transgressions. *Note*; (1.) Sinners are self-murderers: they might have lived, if they would have been obedient; but they prefer sin and death. (2.) They who walk in the ways of their wicked ancestors, must expect their judgments.

6. He gave them up to their own inventions. *Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby*



4 Seeing then that I will cut off from thee my sword go forth out of his sheath against all the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall flesh from the south to the north :

whereby they should not live. He gave them up to the idolatrous customs of the nations, and suffered them to follow the vain traditions of their apostate forefathers. Though some interpret this of the judgments that he sent upon them; others of the rites of the ceremonial law, on which depending for acceptance with God without any reference to the Messiah, they became a stumbling-block to them, instead of leading them to Christ, &c. (See the Annotations.) *And I polluted them in their own gifts, suffering them to offer sacrifices to idols, even the inhuman oblations of the first-born to Moloch, to make them desolate: thus weakened by their own more than savage conduct, they became an easy prey to their enemies: to the end that they might know that I am the Lord, righteous in the punishments inflicted upon them.* Note; (1.) A greater curse cannot fall upon the sinner, than to be left of God to the wickedness of his own heart. (2.) God will make himself known to sinners: if they will not receive him as their Lord and Saviour, they shall prove him to be God the avenger.

4thly, Their provocation ceased not in the wilderness; but when they came into the land of Canaan the same abominations were practised.

1. When God had fulfilled his promise to them, and brought them into the good land, they trespassed yet more and more. Instead of confining themselves to God's altar, they, in conformity to the customs of the heathen, chose hills and groves for their places of worship, and offered there their sacrifices, incense and libations, which, if offered to the God of Israel, were contrary to his precept: but probably they rather served their idols, which made the provocation of their offering greater. And, though warned of the folly and sin of their idolatrous services, when they had God's altar to go to, they persisted in their perverseness; and the high places were to the last frequented: it is called *Bamah*, that is, *the high place, unto this day*. So inveterately rooted is the love of sin in the heart of the sinner.

2. Even after all the judgments executed upon them, the present generation committed the same abominations, polluting themselves with idols, and causing their children to pass through the fire to Moloch; with the folly and wickedness of which God justly upbraids them; and how then could they dare inquire of him? or what answer of peace could they expect from him? he swears by himself, that neither their persons nor petitions should be regarded; and their schemes of currying favour with their heathen masters, by compliances with their worship, and incorporating with them by intermarriages, he will blast: either they shall refuse to admit them to join with them, or despise them for their perfidy. Note; (1.) Little is ever got by sinful compliances: the very enemies of religion will honour those who shew steadiness and integrity; while they treat apostates with contempt. (2.) They who by a religious profession have once forfeited the world's favour, may despair of ever recovering it again.

5thly, Since they would not bow to the sceptre of his righteous government, God threatens,

1. To rule them with a rod of iron, disappointing their

schemes, and pouring out his fury upon them: they shall not be suffered to mingle with the heathen, among whom they are scattered, but thence will God collect them: when the Babylonians shall have subdued these nations, they shall be brought into the wilderness of the people, be carried captives into Chaldea, and there God will judge and punish them, as he had punished their fathers in the wilderness, after they came out of Egypt. Note; They strive in vain, who seek to frustrate God's holy counsels.

2. There is mercy in reserve for a remnant, when the rebels are purged out by his judgments.

[1.] The rebels shall be for ever cut off from the congregation of the Lord; shall never more enter the land of Israel, given up to their idolatries, and totally excluded from God's worship; so that they shall pollute his holy name no more, by joining him with their idols; and at the same time that they pretended to honour him with their gifts, still continuing in their idolatry. Note; (1.) The rebellious sinner will be eternally separated at last from the congregation of the just, and never enter the rest of glory. (2.) That soul is completely miserable, which God abandons. (3.) Pretences to religion, when the heart is enslaved by idol lusts, do but add profaneness and hypocrisy to iniquity.

[2.] The faithful shall be separated, and blessed with God's regard. *They shall pass under the rod*, visited with corrections, and recovered in the furnace of affliction. *They shall be brought again into the bond of the covenant*, be acknowledged as God's people, be restored again from their dispersion to their own land, and serve God in his Zion, his holy mountain. Their oblations and their worship shall be accepted, they penitently acknowledging, bewailing, and abhorring themselves for their former transgressions; and God will be sanctified in them before the heathen, who will confess his faithfulness to his promises, his power and grace displayed in their recovery; and they shall know that he is the Lord, by experience of these his dispensations of mercy towards them, wrought not for their sakes, who deserved nothing but to perish in their iniquities, but for his own name's sake, most eminently to display his glory, as the promise-keeping and sin-pardoning God. Note; (1.) Afflictions are blessed means of good to those who are not incorrigibly impenitent. (2.) When God accepts our persons in Christ Jesus, then our poor services become a sweet favour through the Beloved. (3.) The sinner that returns to God and finds favour, sees in the glass of God's love the baseness, malignity, and ingratitude of sin, and loaths himself for all his abominations. (4.) We never know God truly, till by experience, coming to him as lost sinners, we prove the wonders of his pardoning love. (5.) All our salvation flows, not from our deserts, but God's rich mercy; and as he designs his own glory herein, to the praise of the glory of his grace it must be wholly ascribed.

6thly, We have in this chapter another prophecy, which would most properly have begun the next chapter. The subject of both is the same, the threatened ruin of Judah and Jerusalem.

1. The forest of the south field, toward which the prophet



5 That all flesh may know that I the LORD have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath; it shall not return any more:

6 Sigh therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of *thy* loins; and with bitterness sigh before their eyes.

7 And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak *as* water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord GOD.

8 ¶ Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

9 Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD; Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished:

10 It is sharpened to make a fore slaughter;

it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contemneth the rod of my son, *as* every tree.

11 And he hath given it to be furbished, that it may be handled: the sword is sharpened, and it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer.

12 Cry and howl, son of man: for it shall be upon my people, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel: terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon *thy* thigh.

13 Because *it is* a trial, and what if *the sword* contemn even the rod? it shall be no more, saith the Lord GOD.

14 Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite *thine* hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it is the sword of the great men

prophet is commanded to set his face and drop his word, is the city of Jerusalem, full of inhabitants, unfruitful as the trees of the wood, and the haunt of wicked men fierce and ravenous as the beasts of the forest.

2. God threatens to kindle a fire in it, a fire of wrath; and the conflagration shall be universal, devouring and destroying all ranks, young and old without distinction, from one end of the land to the other; and none can quench it; a destruction so terrible shall mark the finger of divine vengeance, and even the surrounding heathens shall acknowledge that this is Jehovah's doing.

3. Ezekiel makes his complaint to God. *Ab! Lord God, they say of me, Dost he not speak parables?* they scoffed at the message that he brought them, as unintelligible; and counted it not worth their attention. *Note;* They who have no inclination to profit by the word of God, will always have some fault to find with the delivery of it.

#### CH A P. XXI.

*Ver. 2. Set thy face toward Jerusalem*] As if God had said, "Since they deride thee, and call thee a speaker of parables, use not the parable of the southern forest, but speak plainly of Jerusalem and Israel by name." From this series of the discourse, appears more evidently what we have remarked on the 14th verse of the preceding chapter,—that these chapters should not be separated. See Houbigant.

*Ver. 3. And say to the land of Israel*] The prophet addresses Jerusalem and Judæa, his face turned towards them, and speaks to them as if they were present. Instead of, *will cut off from thee*, Houbigant reads, *will take away or carry off from thee*; and he reads the fourth verse thus; *Because thou hast taken away the righteous as well as the wicked from thee; therefore, &c.* The plain meaning is, that the just as well as the wicked should be involved

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in the same common calamity, and should be carried away into captivity together; which we know was the case.

*Ver. 5. I—have drawn forth my sword*] The sword of the Lord was Nebuchadrezzar, who, after having executed the Lord's judgments upon his people, lived above twenty years. The meaning is, that this sword should not return any more into the sheath, till it had executed all God's purposes. It should not return in vain. See Jer. l. 9.

*Ver. 6. With the breaking of thy loins*] *With trembling or shivering of loins.* The allusion seems to be to the pangs of a woman in child-birth. See Isa. xxi. 3. Jer. xxx. 6.

*Ver. 7. For the tidings*] *Because tidings shall come, at which every heart, &c. Behold, they draw near, and it shall come to pass, &c.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 10. Should we then make mirth*] Houbigant reads, *That it may cast down the sceptre of my son, sparing no wood:* that is, "The sword of Nebuchadrezzar shall overthrow the power of the king of Judah, and shall neither pity nor spare." See ver. 19, &c.

*Ver. 11. And he hath given it to be furbished*] *I have given it to be furbished, that he may handle it. This is that sharpened, that furbished sword, to be delivered into the hand of the slayer.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 13. Because it is a trial*] *Because [this sword] hath been approved, and the sceptre when it shall not spare it shall be no more, saith the Lord God.* God foretels that the sceptre of Israel shall be no more, after the sword of Nebuchadrezzar had smitten it; as it had happened before, when, Jeconiah being driven out, Zedekiah was appointed king. The sceptre here means only the royal sceptre in the house of David, and not that supreme authority which Jacob foretold should not forsake Judah till the coming of the Messiah.

*Ver. 14. And let the sword be doubled*] *Make the sword double, make threefold the sword of the slayers: it is the sword,*

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that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers.

15 I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that *their* heart may faint; and *their* ruins be multiplied: ah! *it is* made bright, *it is* wrapped up for the slaughter.

16 Go thee one way or other, *either* on the right hand, *or* on the left, whithersoever thy face *is* set.

17 I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the LORD have said *it*.

18 ¶ The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,

19 Also thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose *it* at the head of the way to the city.

20 Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced.

21 For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made *his* arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver.

22 At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint *battering* rams against the gates, to cast a mount, *and* to build a fort.

23 And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their fight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken.

24 Therefore thus saith the Lord God;

*the sword of the great slaughter, which shall turn them into fear.* Houbigant. Kennicott would render the latter part, *The sword of the soldiers*, [that is to say, of the Babylonians] *The sword of the great soldier* [namely, of the warlike of Babylon] *which*, &c. See ver. 19.

*Ver. 15. It is wrapped up for the slaughter*] *It is sharpened for the slaughter.* Houbigant, and so the Chaldee. God addresses the sword in the next verse.

*Ver. 19, 20. Appoint thee two ways, &c.] Appoint thee two roads for the king of Babylon's sword to come by: Let both go forth out of one land; and choose thou a way-mark: Choose it at the head of the road towards the city.* *Ver. 20. Point out a road for the sword to go to Rabbath, &c.* Instead of *To Judah in Jerusalem, the defenced*; Houbigant reads, *To Judah in Jerusalem, that he may besiege it.*

*Ver. 21, 22. For the king of Babylon stood, &c.] For the king of Babylon stands, &c.—He casts lots by, blends or mingles the arrows; he inquires by images, he pours upon or pries into the liver or entrails.* *Ver. 22. On his right hand is the lot against Jerusalem, to appoint captains to open the mouth for slaughter.* The method of divination by arrows is still in use among the Turks and idolatrous Arabs, and is thus well described by D'Herbelot: "The idolatrous Arabs used a sort of lots, which they called lots by arrows. These arrows were without head or feather, and called in their language *Achdah* or *Azlam*. They were three in number, inclosed in a bag, held in the hands of one whom they called *Mobaver Hobal*, or the diviner; who gave answers for *Hobal*, an ancient idol in the temple of Mecca before the coming of Mahomet. Upon one of these arrows was written, *Command me, Lord*. Upon the second, *Forbid*, or *prevent, Lord*: the third arrow was blank. When any one wanted to determine upon an action, he went to the diviner with a present; who drew one of the arrows from his bag;

"and if the arrow of command appeared, the Arab immediately set about the affair; if that of prohibition appeared, he deferred the execution of his enterprize for a whole year: when the blank arrow came out, which was called in the Arabic *Minib*, he was to draw again. The Arabs consulted these arrows upon all their affairs, and particularly their marriages, the circumcision of their children, their journeys, and expeditions in war; they also made use of them for the dividing of any thing, and particularly the parts of the victim or camel, which they sacrificed upon certain stones, or to certain idols, which were placed round the temple at Mecca. Mahomet in the chapter of the Koran intitled *Maidat*, or "of the table," at the beginning, where he is speaking of things prohibited to the Mussulmen, expressly forbids this practice in these words; *Make no division with the arrows of lot.*" See *Bibliothèque Orientale*, under the word *ACDAH*. The authors of the *Universal History* remark, that this superstitious custom of divining by arrows was used by the ancient Greeks and other nations. The *Commentary* of St. Jerome on the present passage strikingly agrees with what we are told of the aforesaid custom of the old Arabs; "He shall stand (says he) in the highway, and consult the oracle after the manner of his nation, that he may cast arrows into a quiver, and mix them together, being written upon or marked with the names of each people, that he may see whose arrow will come forth, and which city he ought first to attack." See *Potter's Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 334. and *Salé's Preliminary Discourse* to the *Koran*, p. 126.

*Ver. 23. It shall be unto them as a false divination*] Houbigant renders this; *But he* [Nebuchadrezzar] *seems to them* [the Jews] *as divining vain things, as boasting empty execrations: Nevertheless, he shall call to remembrance the impiety,*

Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, *I say*, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand.

25 ¶ And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity *shall have* an end,

26 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this *shall not be* the same: exalt *him that is low*, and abase *him that is high*.

27 I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no *more*, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it *him*.

28 ¶ And thou, son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword *is* drawn: for the slaughter *it is* furbished, to consume because of the glittering:

29 Whiles they see vanity unto thee, whiles they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of *them that are slain*, of the wicked, whose day is come when their iniquity *shall have* an end.

30 Shall I cause *it* to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity.

31 And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee, I will blow against thee in the fire

*piety* [the falsehood and infidelity of their king Zedekiah], that *they may be taken*. The verse is extremely difficult; and the passage especially, *To them that have sworn oaths*, has not yet been decidedly understood by any commenator. Archbishop Secker supposes the oaths to have been false oaths which the Jews had sworn to the Chaldeans.

Ver. 25. *And thou, profane wicked prince*] *Thou therefore, pierce that wicked prince of Israel, &c.* The address is made to the sword to destroy Zedekiah, whom the prophet calls *wicked* chiefly with respect to the breach of his oath which he had made to Nebuchadrezzar.

Ver. 26. *This shall not be the same*] *This is not the same which it was; that which was humble hath exalted itself; thou, therefore, abase the exalted.* This alludes to ch. xvii. 14. where it is said, *That the kingdom might be base*, Zedekiah serving under tribute.

Ver. 27. *And it shall be no more*] *Nor shall this be the same, until he come, &c.* "After Zedekiah is deprived of his regal authority, there shall be no more kings of that family till the coming of the Messiah; the king so often foretold and promised; who in due time shall sit upon the throne of his father David, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end." There is an age to come, as well as a person to come who should begin that age; who is therefore named in Scripture, *The Father of the age to come*. Sometimes a substantive is joined to this epithet, denoting his dignity. The Hebrew words here are *עד בא אשר לו* *ad ba asher lo*, &c. which Montanus renders, *Until he come who was to come*. In all places, however, where this text occurs, the Jews understood the Messiah by *him that cometh*, and therefore often spoke of the Messiah in our Saviour's days by this circumlocution. When John had a mind to satisfy his disciples, he sent them to Christ with this question, *Art thou he that cometh?* And it was part of Martha's creed, that Christ was *He that was to come*. See Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 37.

Ver. 28. *Thus saith the Lord God concerning the Ammonites*] Concerning the insults and reproaches which they delivered against the Jews in the time of their oppression and disgrace, compare ch. xxv. 6. and Zeph. ii. 8. This

prophesy against the Ammonites was fulfilled about five years after the taking of Jerusalem. See Jer. xlviii. xlix. and Calmet.

Ver. 29. *Of them that are slain, &c.*] *Of the wicked who were wounded, whose day, &c.* Houbigant. See the note on ver. 14.

Ver. 31. *The hand of brutish men*] *The hand of men skilful to kindle a flame, and to bring destruction.* Houbigant. Instead of *brutish men*, the LXX read *barbarians*; meaning the Medes and Persians, the successors of Nebuchadrezzar.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, That the people might be left without excuse, we have here a clear exposition of the foregoing parable.

1. Against Jerusalem is the prophetic word directed, the forest, where the fire of wrath is about to kindle, and the holy places, the temple and its courts, the profanations of which God will especially avenge. He is against them, and nothing then can protect them from ruin; he threatens to draw the sword of judgment, and *cut off the righteous and the wicked*, who share often together in national calamities, though God will abundantly make up to his faints in inward consolations, whatever outwardly they suffer in common with others. *From the south to the north* universal ruin is spread by the Chaldean army; and the sword, once drawn, is no more sheathed, till it has made an utter end of them, agreeably to the foregoing parable, chap. xx. 46—48.

2. To affect them with a sense of the terribleness of the threatened ruin, the prophet must himself appear deeply affected with it. He must sigh with such depth and bitterness before them, as if his heart was ready to break; and, as the expression of such vast anguish would make them inquisitive into the cause, he must tell them, that it is *for the doleful tidings* he is sent to deliver, the certain accomplishment of which approached, when *every heart would melt*, &c. their courage fail; and so dispirited would they be, as neither to be able to fight nor fly. God hath spoken it, and not one jot or tittle shall fail. *Note*; (1.) A minister who would affect others with what he

of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, *and* skilful to destroy.

32 Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire: thy

blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no *more* remembered: for I the LORD have spoken it.

speaks, must be affected himself; and a tear dropt over a perishing soul is the most moving admonition. (2.) They who are never so stout-hearted against God's warnings now, will be overwhelmed with terror in the day of their calamity.

2dly, The sword drawn, in the foregoing verses, is sharpened to do terrible execution; glittering and bright, bearing down all before it. The sceptre of Israel's king is as unable to resist its fury, as a rotten stick; or the words may be rendered, *it is the rod of my Son*, the rod of Christ, executing judgment: *It despiseth every tree*, resistance is vain when he strikes; for when God contendeth, he will overcome.

1. It is put into the *slayer's* hand, into the hands of Nebuchadrezzar, and directed against the princes and people of Israel; *against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their ruins be multiplied*, their city utterly demolished, and they, without power of resistance, faint and disheartened. Whichever way the sword moves, to the right or left, it spreads havock around; and the great men who fly in terrors to their secret chambers, find no protection from it, even there slain in their lurking-places. And a severe *trial* it will prove to God's people, when they shall see it *contemn even the rod*, destroy the king, and put an end to the government of David's royal line. *It shall be no more, saith the Lord God*, none of David's family shall again wield the sceptre till the Messiah comes. *Note*; (1.) No eminence of station can secure from God's judgment; nay, rather they who have by their ill examples contributed to the seduction of others, shall be most severely punished. (2.) Terrors will seize the guilty in the day of vengeance, from which they cannot flee. (3.) The strongest fortrefs has no defence, when God is the assailant. (4.) The sword of judgment turns every way; let no sinner hope to escape from it.

2. The prophet is commanded to testify his bitter grief at these desolations, and to call on the people to join his lamentations. He must *cry and howl*, for the ravages that he foretels; *smiting his hands*, in the greatest agony, while the third time he redoubles the warning, *A sword, a sword*, which some refer to the three captivities of Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah; others to the coming of the Chaldeans: first, when they took Jerusalem; secondly, when Nebuzar-adan burnt it: and lastly, when, in the twenty-third year of his reign, Nebuchadrezzar carried away the remnant of the people, Jer. lii. 5—30. Thus *God will cause his fury to rest*, when he hath executed vengeance on the devoted land, according to his faithful word; and seeing this must shortly come to pass, the prophet expostulates with them on the unreasonableness of their present jollity: *should we then make mirth?* when a drawn sword hangs over our heads: rather in the dust of deepest humiliation, with bitter cries and tears, should they seek to avert the impending blow. *Note*; (1.) They who declare the terrors of the Lord must urge them vehemently, and redouble their warnings. (2.) It is a heart-felt grief

to God's ministers, to see sinners unconcerned about their approaching and endless miseries. (3.) God's word will have its accomplishment, however now men slight and despise it.

3dly, The same subject is farther pursued, and the sword brought to their walls.

1. He is commanded to describe on a tile, or a table, two ways, leading from Babylon: the one to Rabbath, the capital of the Ammonites; the other to Jerusalem, the fortress and metropolis of Judah. Here, *at the head of the way*, he must represent Nebuchadrezzar halting; and, though resolved to attack both places, uncertain which to begin, using divination to determine his way; *brightening the arrows* on which it is supposed the names of the cities were engraven, and determining that the first that was drawn was to be first attacked; *consulting the images*, and *looking into the liver*, the methods used by the heathens to obtain direction, and inquire into the success of their enterprizes. And all his divinations directed him to take the right-hand road which led to Jerusalem, to encamp around it, appoint the officers to direct the siege, raise up the hostile mounts, and batter the gates, till at the breach they might enter into the city. *Note*; (1.) The wisest men are often at a stand; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. (2.) Many are doing God's work, who are not at all sensible of him by whose hand they are guided.

2. Both prince and people draw their ruin upon their own heads.

[1.] The people who despise the prophetic warning shall be seized and led captives. The Jews derided the divination as vain, and not to be regarded; and the mention of it by the prophet disturbed not their security; though the *oaths* that they had *sworn* and broken might justly alarm them with fears of an avenging God. Or perhaps they depended on the league made with Egypt, and confirmed by mutual oaths, for assistance. *But he will call to remembrance the iniquity*, the treachery and perjury of Zedekiah and the people, *that they may be taken as birds in an evil net*. *Therefore, thus saith the Lord God* who is able to accomplish his purposes, and true to his word, *because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered* by new transgressions, adding to their past sins, *in that your transgressions are discovered*, their perfidious conduct exposed openly to the nations around, and to the king of Babylon; *so that in all your doings, your sins do appear visible to every eye; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance before God and the king of Babylon, ye shall be taken with the hand*, seized as a helpless bird in a net, and led captives for their iniquities. *Note*; (1.) Sinners often flatter themselves that the warnings of God are false divinations, but they will be found dreadful realities. (2.) The transgressions of the wicked will be discovered and punished; if not before, at farthest at the great day of recompence.

[2.] The prince of Judah has a peculiar burden laid on him, as the chief author of the nation's ruin. He is charged

C H A P. XXII.

*A catalogue of sins in Jerusalem. God will burn them as dross in his furnace. The general corruption of prophets, priests, princes, and people.*

[Before Christ 592.]

**M**OREOVER the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations.

3 Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself.

4 Thou art become guilty in thy blood

that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries.

5 *Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed.*

6 Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood.

7 In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow:

charged as *profane* and *wicked*; and what can be more so than the ingratitude, perjury, treachery, and rebellion of which he was guilty? and kings are not too high to be plainly told their sin and danger. His *day is come* to be destroyed, *when iniquity shall have an end*, when the measure shall be filled, and the punishment due to it inflicted. *Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown*, degrade him from his dignity, and depose him from the throne of Judah; *this shall not be the same*, his kingdom shall not continue: *exalt him that is low*, Jehoiachin now a captive, Jer. lii. 31, 32. *and abase him that is high*, Zedekiah, the reigning monarch; or it may signify the changes which the conqueror at his pleasure would make. *I will overturn, overturn, overturn it*, certainly and utterly, *and it shall be no more a kingdom* under the rule of David's royal posterity, *until he come whose right it is*, the Messiah, raised up to sit on the throne of David his father, Luke, i. 32. *and I will give it him*, even a throne enduring as the days of eternity, and universal from pole to pole. *Note*; (1.) Profaneness and wickedness in a prince are doubly criminal, as the evil of his example is more extensively infectious. (2.) The day will come when all who do iniquity, shall receive their righteous doom. (3.) Crowns are precarious possessions; the only unfading diadem must be sought in a better world. (4.) Pride will have a fall, while humility is the way to honour. (5.) The Lord Jesus is the rightful king and heir of all things; whatever enemies oppose his advancement, must finally be overthrown, and all his foes be made his footstool.

4thly, Though Judah be first visited, let not Ammon think to escape.

1. They had provoked God by *their reproach*, insulting over his Israel, as if he could not save them, chap. xv. Zeph. iii. 8—10. while they flattered themselves, now the king of Babylon was returned thither, that their gods would protect them; and their diviners and soothsayers confirmed them in their delusion. *Note*; (1.) God is jealous for his people, and will suffer no insult shewn them

to go unpunished. (2.) Sinners usually flatter themselves into their ruin.

2. God threatens to pour out his wrath upon them. The sword that was drawn against Judah is still unsheathed, *furbished for the slaughter*, and whetted *to consume them, to bring them on the necks of the slain, of the wicked*: they who slew the rebellious Jews when their day was come, and their iniquities ripe for destruction, must perish by the same arm; nor will the sword return to its scabbard, till it has executed God's vengeance upon them *in the land of their nativity*, the place where they were settled ever since they were formed into a people. Fierce are the flames of wrath kindled against them; their appointed executioners savage in their tempers, and skilful to destroy. As fuel they must be consumed by the devouring fire of their enemies, and their blood be shed *in the midst of the land* whither the Chaldeans would penetrate; and the ruin they would make should never be repaired; *thou shalt be no more remembered*, saith the Lord God; all the traces of their nation being quite obliterated. *Note*; (1.) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of that God who is a consuming fire. (2.) Sinners are fuel for the flames of hell. (3.) They who promise themselves, because they have long been secure, that they shall be always safe, will be dreadfully surprised when their unexpected ruin comes.

C H A P. XXII.

*Ver. 2. Wilt thou judge? &c.] Wilt thou not judge, wilt thou not judge? &c.*

*Ver. 4. Thou hast caused thy days to draw near]* "Thou hast advanced the time of thy punishment, by heaping up the measure of thine iniquities." Instead of *Thou art become guilty in thy blood*, at the beginning of this verse, Houbigant reads, *Thou art become obnoxious to the blood which thou hast shed, &c.*

*Ver. 5. Which art infamous, &c.] Infamous of character, mighty in broils.*

*Ver. 6. Every one were in thee, &c.] Every one to their power have joined with, or helped thee to shed blood.*

8 Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths.

9 In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness.

10 In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution.

11 And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

12 In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD.

13 Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.

14 Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken *it*, and will do *it*.

15 And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee.

16 And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

17 ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

18 Son of man, the house of Israel is to

me become dross: all they *are* brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are *even* the dross of silver.

19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.

20 *As* they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt *it*; so will I gather *you* in mine anger, and in my fury, and I will leave *you there*, and melt you.

21 Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof.

22 As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.

23 ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

24 Son of man, say unto her, Thou *art* the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation.

25 *There is* a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravenging the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have

*Ver. 9. In thee are men that carry tales, &c.]* "Who bear false witness against men in capital cases." Houbigant reads, *Thy men are perfidious, that they may shed blood.* The reader, for the best exposition of this chapter, will refer to the 18th.

*Ver. 12. Greedily gained of]* *Made a gain of.*

*Ver. 13. I have smitten mine hand]* That is to say, either as an expression of indignation, or in testimony of my horror at their crimes and cruelties. See chap. xxi. 14—17.

*Ver. 15, 16. And will consume thy filthiness, &c.]* *And I will bring the fame of thy filthiness whither thou hopedst not:* *ver. 16. And thou shalt be profaned, or defiled by it, in the sight of the heathen, who shall know, &c.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 18—21. The house of Israel, &c.]* *The house of Israel is to me become all of them alloy; brass, and tin, and iron, and lead in the midst of the furnace: alloy of silver are they.* *ver. 19. Because ye are all run into alloy, therefore, behold, I will amass you together in the midst of Jerusalem.* *Ver. 20. As they amass, &c. so will I amass you in mine anger and in my fury, and will put you in, and melt you.* *Ver. 21. Yea, I will amass you together, &c.* God's vengeance is often compared to fire; but here it is so in a literal sense, for both city and temple were reduced to ashes.

*Ver. 24, 25. Thou art the land, &c.]* *This land shall not have showers, nor be softened with rain, in the day of indignation.* *Ver. 25. Because her prophets in the midst of her are like, &c.* Houbigant, after the LXX; who observes, that dryness

hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

27 Her princes in the midst thereof *are* like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, *and* to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

28 And her prophets have daubed them with untempered *mortar*, seeing vanity, and

divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the LORD hath not spoken.

29 The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

30 And I fought for a man among them,

dryness and sterility, not uncleanness, are the subject of this verse. The false prophets are meant in the 25th verse. See ver. 28.

*Ver. 27. To get dishonest gain] For greediness of lucre.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jerusalem, the bloody city, is here brought to the bar, to be convicted and condemned: and the prophet is constituted of God both her accuser and her judge.

1. Her abominations are many, great, and aggravated; and they are *shewn* her to evince and manifest the justice of God in her destruction.

[1.] Murder: The blood of innocents was shed *in the midst* of her, from assassinations, tyrannical abuse of power, or perversion of justice; the guilt of which cried aloud. The princes and magistrates, who should have avenged such crimes, were themselves the first to perpetrate them to the utmost of *their power*, while tale-bearers fought to incense them by malicious reports and insinuations; and were chargeable with all the mischief which ensued; and perjured wretches or assassins, for money, were ready to swear away the life of the innocent, or murder in secret such as, by malice or revenge, were marked for their bloody knife.

[2.] Idolatry: The sad effects of which were their pollution, and, in consequence, their destruction. And those who ran not to the grosser excesses indulged themselves in eating of the sacrifices on the mountains, and thereby became partakers with the idolaters.

[3.] Disobedience to parents: They *set light by father and mother*, despised their authority, disobeyed their commands, or mocked at their infirmities; and this is among the most atrocious of crimes.

[4.] Oppression and deceit: They took advantage of the ignorance or necessities of the stranger; vexed with exorbitant demands, or litigious suits, the fatherless and widow, who were unable to defend themselves; extorted usury from their brethren; and with greediness increased their gain to their neighbour's disadvantage.

[5.] The profanation of holy things, and particularly of the sabbaths: They despised God's ordinances; either totally neglected the ceremonial rites and worship of the temple, or performed them in a careless perfunctory manner; and the sabbaths were no more observed than common days; and that generally opens a wide door to all ungodliness.

[6.] Lewdness of all sorts; the most criminal and odious, open and bare-faced, that human nature could be supposed to commit: all of which called aloud for vengeance.

[7.] At the root of all was forgetfulness of God: They left him far above out of their sight; and then there was no wickedness which they feared to commit.

2. The charge being indisputable, the prophet, as judge, pronounces sentence on the criminal. Her day is come, her measure of iniquity is full, she is ripe for vengeance; therefore God *hath made her a reproach to the heathen* far and near, *infamous* in their eyes; so vile and abandoned was her conduct; and *much vexed* with their derision and insults, yet no more than she most justly deserved. With indignation God smites his hand at her *dishonest gain* and *bloody crimes*; and his fierce anger how can she sustain, when his terrible word shall receive its accomplishment, and his threatened wrath be poured out upon her? In consequence of which she will be *scattered among the heathen*, and miserably *dispersed in the countries*, till her filthiness shall be *consumed* by the destruction of the ring-leaders in iniquity, and the recovery of a remnant brought to repentance in the furnace of affliction. And *thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself*, rejected of God, and possessing nothing but a miserable being in want and wretchedness; *and thou shalt know that I am the Lord*; when these judgments are inflicted, and God's almighty power, impartial justice, and inviolable truth, are hereby signally displayed. *Note*; (1.) Though God bears long with sinners, he will not bear always. (2.) Reproach for God is honour and happiness; reproach for sin truly infamous, and the prelude to everlasting shame and contempt. (3.) The stoutest-hearted sinners will tremble in a day of wrath. (4.) They who promise themselves impunity in their sins, in opposition to God's warnings, will find themselves terribly deceived. (5.) Sooner or later the soul will be made to know what a portion it has lost by apostacy from God, and what wages it has earned, even eternal death.

2dly, They who have made themselves refuse and vile, must expect to be treated accordingly.

1. The whole house of Israel is become dross; once they were silver, but now wretchedly degenerated, despicable and useless as the scum of the furnace. Nothing precious remained in them; but like the baser metals they were as brass in impudence, as iron for hardness of heart, as tin for hypocrisy, and as lead for stupidity under all their warnings.

2. God threatens to gather them, as metals into the furnace, into Jerusalem, whither they would fly on the approach of the Chaldeans, silver, brass, iron, lead, and tin together; some gracious souls, represented by silver, being found among the rest, who would be purified by that fire of affliction, which would consume the ungodly as dross. There God will blow upon them as a refiner, in  
wrath



that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

31 Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God.

wrath and anger melt them with his judgments, *and leave them there* under the dire tokens of his displeasure, devoted to famine, pestilence, and the sword during the siege; and made to acknowledge, in the judgments that they felt, the heavy hand of God which was laid upon them. *Note*, In the day of judgment the sinners of every character will be collected, and cast into the furnace of fire; and they who are once shut up there will remain there to eternity.

3dly; The various methods of divine providence and grace made no impression on the people of Israel. They were neither cleansed from their filthiness by the judgments that they suffered, nor reformed by the warnings which they received; like the parched ground not rained upon, so were their hearts hard and impenetrable; and while God withheld from them the dew of heaven to water the earth, in his indignation he sent a heavier judgment, withholding the dew of his heavenly influences. All ranks and orders of men among them were advanced to the summit of wickedness.

1. The false prophets, who should, by the office which they pretended to assume, have stood in the gap, and by their prayers and labours sought to avert the impending judgments, instead of that, formed a conspiracy to persecute the true prophets, and flatter the people to their ruin. Like ravening lions they devoured souls, taking away the lives of the innocent, or by their false doctrines murdered immortal souls. *They have taken the treasure and precious things* of the innocent, destroyed by them; or of the deluded, who paid them well for their lying divinations of peace. *They have made her many widows in the midst thereof*, by the murders they have committed, or by their encouraging that rebellion in which so many perished. *Note*; Lying prophets who have deceived sinners to their ruin shall receive the heaviest strokes of vengeance.

2. The priests cordially joined with the false prophets in their wickedness. They violated God's law, perverting it in their explications, and contradicting it in their practice; so that, instead of teaching others, their examples were the greatest encouragement to the wicked. They made no difference between holy and profane, paid no regard to the prescription of God, but lived at large, observing neither distinction of meats nor days; the sabbath to them was but as a common day; they admitted, indiscriminately, any into the courts of the temple, and out of it kept company with the ceremonially unclean, or the abandoned, without a word of rebuke. Thus God was profaned among them, his word abused, his ordinances slighted, his authority despised.

3. The princes, who as ministers of justice should have

## C H A P. XXIII.

*The abominations of Abolab and Abalibab. Abalibab is to be plagued by her lovers. The prophet reproveth the adulteries of them both, and sheweth their judgments.*

[Before Christ 592.]

THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

vindicated the oppressed, and exerted their power in the protection of injured innocence, were themselves like wolves ravening the prey; insidious, arbitrary, lawless, cruel; not only plundering the weak with impunity, and with dishonest gain grinding the faces of the poor, but even imbruing their hands in blood, as their rage, revenge, or covetousness led them; destroying the lives of those who had offended them, or on whose spoils they had fixed their greedy eye. And, shocking to relate! the infamous prophets, to curry favour with these wealthy patrons, flattered them in their wickedness, and daubed them with untempered mortar; probably persuading them that they did God service in persecuting the troublesome prophets, and the pious who remonstrated against their sins; and vindicating their cruel deeds to others as wholesome severities. *Note*; (1.) The height of station aggravates the enormity of the offence. (2.) The daubing prophets at the elbows of the great, who prostitute the sacred office which they pretend to bear, by mean compliances and infamous countenance given to their sins, shall shortly meet an avenging God.

4. The people naturally followed examples so pernicious; the system of corruption descended; and as each in an inferior station had power, he used it to oppression; and exercised robbery, vexing the poor by extortion, and treating the stranger wrongfully, whose ignorance laid him the more easily open to deceit and imposition.

5. So general and universal was the apostacy, that not a man was found among all these prophets, priests, princes, or people, who attempted to interpose to make up the hedge, or stand in the gap to avert by his prayers, his admonitions, or his labours, the impending wrath, and endeavour to effect the reformation of the land. God sought for such, and fought in vain. *Note*; (1.) Sin makes the breach at which ruin enters. (2.) When none are found to pray or plead with God for the land, the case is desperate.

6. Because of these things, God's indignation is poured out; the fire kindles, the sinners are consumed together, and their own ways recompensed on their heads. *Note*; However terrible the end of the ungodly may be, their sufferings shall be no more than their deserts.

## C H A P. XXIII.

THE style of this chapter, like that of chap. xvi., is adapted to men among whom, at that time, no refinement subsisted. Large allowance must be made for language addressed to an ancient eastern people, in the worst period of their history; all whose ideas were sensual, and whose grand inducement to idolatry seems to have been the brutal impurities which it encouraged.

*Ver. 2. There were two women, &c.]* The Hebrews, derived

2 Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother :

3 And they committed whoredoms in Egypt ; they committed whoredoms in their youth : there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity.

4 And the names of them *were* Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister : and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus *were* their names ; Samaria *is* Aholah, and Jerufalem Aholibah.

5 And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine : and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians *her* neighbours,

6 *Which were* clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses.

7 Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them *that were* the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted : with all their idols she defiled herself.

8 Neither left she her whoredoms *brought* from Egypt : for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her.

9 Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted.

10 These discovered her nakedness : they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword : and she became famous among women ; for they had executed judgment upon her.

11 And when her sister Aholibah saw *this*, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in *her* whoredoms.

12 She doted upon the Assyrians *her* neighbours, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men.

13 Then I saw that she was defiled, *that* they *took* both one way.

14 And *that* she increased her whoredoms : for when she saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion,

15 Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity :

16 And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea.

17 And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them.

rived from one source, born of Abraham and Sarah, made but one people, and continued united till the separation under Jeroboam. Then the ten tribes being separated from Judah and Benjamin, they formed as it were two people, governed by different kings. *Aholah*, the eldest of the two sisters, denotes the kingdom of Samaria, or the ten tribes ; the word אהלה *ahalab*, signifies *her tent* or *tabernacle* : she is styled the elder, either on account of the greater number of tribes whereof this kingdom was composed, or because she was the first who forsook the Lord, and gave herself up to idolatry. אהליבה *Aholibah*, signifies *my tent is in her* ; because of the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. This chapter is of the same design with the xvth, and should be compared with it. If a modern reader shall call the terms in it too coarse and indelicate, we can only refer to the time in which the author lived, and to the manners of his country, where perhaps descriptions of this kind did not carry those secondary ideas which they do with us ; and it should be remembered that the prophet's intention is to raise the highest detestation possible of idolatry.

Ver. 4. Thus were their names] And as to their names.

VOL. IV.

Ver. 10. And she became famous, &c.] And she became the common talk among the women, after judgment had been executed upon her. As she had formerly been renowned among the heathen for her beauty ; so she was now everywhere mentioned as a remarkable instance of God's vengeance. Instead of *She became famous*, &c. Houbigant reads, *She was then in the power of tyrants, who executed*, &c.

Ver. 11. And when her sister] And though, &c.

Ver. 14. Saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, &c.] " Before she had seen the Assyrians, upon the bare relation concerning them, or, upon the painting only which was made of them, her passion was inflamed towards them." Calmet. Some suppose that this may refer to the mystic cells, on the walls of which the images of their deities were pourtrayed. See on chap. viii. 7, &c. Instead of, *Exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads*, in the next verse, Houbigant reads, *Having their heads bound with a dyed tiara, or turban*. Ovid, speaking of these tiaras, says,

*Tempora purpureis tentat velare tiaris.*

METAM. lib. ix. \*

\* She tries to veil her temples with purple tiaras.

Q9

Ver.

18 So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister.

19 Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt.

20 For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh *is as* the flesh of asses, and whose issue *is like* the issue of horses.

21 Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.

22 ¶ Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side;

23 The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, *and* all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses.

24 And they shall come against thee with chariots, waggons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, *which* shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they

shall judge thee according to their judgments.

25 And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire.

26 They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels.

27 Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom *brought* from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more.

28 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand *of them* whom thou hatest, into the hand *of them* from whom thy mind is alienated:

29 And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

30 I will do these *things* unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, *and* because thou art polluted with their idols.

31 Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thine hand.

*Ver. 19. Yet she multiplied, &c.]* Instead of one calf they would have two; and so favourite a superstition were the calves of Dan and Beth-el, that they kept their ground against all those general reformatations which divers of their better kings had made to purge the land from idolatry. See Div. Leg. vol. iii.

*Ver. 22, 23. I will raise up thy lovers, &c.]* “I will execute my judgments upon thee by those very Babylonians of whose alliance and idolatries thou hast been so fond. Thou hast since indeed broken the league which thou madest with them, contracting a new one with Egypt, and thereby provoked them to avenge thy perfidy. These, with the other nations mentioned in the next verse, shall all come upon thee.” *Pekod, Shoa, and Koa,* are understood by Grotius as proper names, agreeably to our translation. By *Pekod* he understands the Bactrians, by *Shoa* a people in Armenia, and by *Koa* the Medes. The Vulgate, however, translates the words as appellatives, *noblensens, tyrants,* and *princes*: and Jerome takes them to be titles of honour.

*Ver. 24. They shall come against thee] They shall bring against thee from the north chariots and wheels, &c. And I*

*will give them the power of judgment, that they may execute judgment upon thee.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 25. I will set my jealousy against thee] “*They shall punish thee with that fury with which a man in the rage of jealousy shall treat a wife who has been unfaithful to him. The mutilations mentioned in this verse were common among the Chaldeans. St. Jerome assures us, that they frequently cut off the nose and the ears of adulterers; and Martial, to the same purpose, epist. xliii. lib. iii. says,

*Quis tibi persuasit nares abscindere mæcho?*

This was practised towards the women in Egypt.

*Ver. 27. Thus will I make, &c.] “*These severe judgments shall effectually deter thee from idolatry, and make thee to abhor the least approaches towards it.” Accordingly, we find that after the captivity the Jews never returned to their idolatrous practices. See Lowth.

*Ver. 31. Therefore will I give her cup, &c.] “*Thou shalt suffer the same punishment as Samaria.” See ver. 33. The *cup* is often used as a metaphor to express chastisement. Comp. Isai. li. 17, &c.

*Ver.*

32 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much.

33 Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria.

34 Thou shalt even drink it and suck it out, and thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.

35 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

36 ¶ The LORD said moreover unto me; Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations;

37 That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them.

38 Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths.

39 For when they had slain their children

to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.

40 And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent: and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments.

41 And sattest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil.

42 And a voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with the men of the common sort were brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads.

43 Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them?

44 Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot: so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the lewd women.

45 ¶ And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands.

46 For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will

*Ver. 34. And pluck off thine own breasts] And shalt tear thy breasts. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 36. Wilt thou judge? &c.] Wilt thou not? &c.*

*Ver. 40. And furthermore] But when they had called in those men who came from far, and to whom they had sent messengers, lo! they came to her, who had washed herself, had painted her eyes [with stibium], and decked herself with ornaments. Ver. 41. She sat upon a stately bed, &c. Houbigant. See 2 Kings, ix. 30. This is spoken of Aholibah only, to whom the Assyrians came principally, after they had seduced Aholah. The times of Ahaz are alluded to, who called in the Assyrians to assist him against the kings of Assyria and Israel; for in those times Aholibah or Judah revolted to the gods of the Assyrians. By the stately bed and table placed before Aholibah, seems to be meant the altar which Ahaz raised after the similitude of that which he had seen at Damascus. See Houbigant's note.*

*Paintedst thy eyes] See Bishop Lowth on Isai. iii. 16. The syrma is a black impalpable powder, and so volatile as to spread itself like down upon a small brass wire fixed in the cork of the bottle which contains it. The extremity of the wire is applied to the interior corner of the eye, resting it*

upon the eyelids, and drawing it softly towards the temples, in order to leave within the eyelids two black streaks.

*Ver. 42. And a voice, &c.] And the voices of men singing harmoniously sounded with them, together with a multitude of Sabeans, who came from the wilderness. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 45. And the righteous men, &c.] The Chaldeans are called righteous, because they came to inflict upon lewd women the punishments they had deserved; and not now to entice them to idolatry: righteous, because they inflicted righteous judgments. The following expressions allude to the common punishments of adulteresses under the law. See Lev. x, &c.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Israel and Judah, sister kingdoms, the daughters of one mother, sprung from the same original stock, are here considered under the character of two infamous women, Aholah and Aholibah.

1. They were early debauched by idolatry; even in Egypt they began to transgress, and lost their virgin honour.

2. Though they were God's espoused ones, and he was pleased

bring up a company upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled.

47 And the company shall stone them with

stones, and dispatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire.

pleased to take them for his own, and to raise them up a numerous offspring, yet they treacherously departed from him, and played the harlot. *Abolab*, which is *Samaria*, signifies *her tabernacle*, she having first forsook God's tabernacle, and set up her own worship at Dan and Beth-el. She is called the *elder*, or greater, the kingdom of Israel consisting of ten tribes. Though she had revolted from the royal house of David, God still termed her his; but her abominable idolatries soon made a fatal and entire separation. She *doated on her lovers*, particularly on her *Assyrian neighbours*; contracted alliances with them; admired their idols, their worship, and military forces, which were so richly dressed; and placed on them the dependence which she withdrew from God. Yet she persisted also in the worship of the gods of Egypt, the beginning of her apostacy, and served the calves in Beth-el and Dan, as well as the newly-introduced deities of the Assyrians. *Note*; Whatever we doat upon becomes our idol; and God will not with impunity suffer us to give the honour, love, and homage, due to him, unto another.

3. For their apostacy, Samaria and Israel were destroyed. God made those on whom they had doated, and whose idols they served, the instruments of his vengeance. They *discovered her nakedness*, stripped her of all her treasures, led her children captives, and utterly ruined the kingdom; executing God's judgments upon her; so that *she became famous among women*. Her crimes and her dreadful end were the general subject of conversation in the neighbouring lands, and afforded an awful warning not to imitate her sins, lest the same plagues should follow. *Note*; (1.) Those whom we have made our tempters, God in righteous judgment often makes our tormentors. (2.) They who render themselves famous by wickedness, will by God's vengeance be made monuments of wretchedness.

adly, Far from taking warning by Samaria's fate, Jerusalem not only copied, but exceeded her abominations. She is called *Abolibab*, or, *my tent or tabernacle is in her*; God having chosen Zion for his peculiar abode; and this exceedingly aggravated the guilt of her apostacy.

1. She took the same way to defile herself which her sister had done, doting upon the Assyrians; admiring the dress and military appearance of their captains and soldiers; courting their alliance; depending on them for protection; increasing their idols beyond what Samaria had done; falling in love with the very pictures of their deified heroes, who were pourtrayed in rich attire on the walls of their temples; and sending messengers to Chaldea to form a league, and adopt their idols and worship. And no sooner had she taken the Babylonians to her adulterous bed, and defiled herself with their idols, than she *was alienated from them*, as lust and loathing often succeed each other. She rebelled under Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, 2 Kings, xxiv. 1. 20. and cast off the alliance with Babylon; and, calling to mind with pleasure the idolatries of the Egyptians, returned to play the harlot with them, *doting on these paramours*, as better suiting her insatiable lewd-

ness, openly *discovering her whoredoms and her nakedness*, as a brazen prostitute hardened against shame. *Note*; (1.) Inordinate appetites indulged only grow more fickle and craving. (2.) Long habit of sin gives effrontery to the lewd, and they dare avow and boast of what others blush to name, and tremble but to think of.

2. God saw and abhorred such shameless idolatry, and *his mind was alienated from her*, as it was *from her sister*. He cast off Judah also from her relation to him, and left her, as a wife divorced, to all the miseries which must ensue when his protection was withdrawn. *Note*; They who provoke God to cast them from his favour, have only themselves to blame for the miseries which follow.

3dly, We have,

1. Judgment pronounced on Jerusalem for her crimes. Those lovers on whom she doted are appointed to be her destroyers: their armies, with a vast train of carriages, at God's command shall come up, besiege and destroy the cities, and lay waste the country. As a jealous husband, enraged with an adulterous wife, God will visit them in fury; the Chaldeans shall cut off *their nose and ears*, literally disfiguring them to render them loathsome, or destroying their king, princes, and priests, represented by these; and slay all the remnant of the people, except those who, stripped of all their ornaments, even to their clothes, shall be driven naked, as slaves, into a miserable captivity; and the few houses in Jerusalem which have stood the siege unhurt shall now be burnt with fire. Delivered into the hands of those they hated, and against whom they had rebelled, they must expect no favour or pity: they will *deal hatefully* with them; treat them with rigour and severity; plunder all their possessions; leave them naked and bare; and in the greatness of their punishment the greatness of their crimes will appear.

2. God's wrath, evidently seen in their ruin, will make their sufferings still more bitter. Though he employs the Chaldeans as instruments, he says, *I will do these things unto thee*; and most righteous will he appear in his judgments: their flagrant idolatries justify his severest strokes of vengeance. Since they walked in Samaria's ways, they deserve to drink of her cup full of fury, a cup of *drunkenness, sorrow, astonishment, and desolation*; the very dregs of which they must suck out; and, exposed to the scorn and derision of the nations around them, for madness and vexation at their wretched state, shall *pluck off their own breasts*, as men in a fit of rage and despair. Because they have *forgotten God*, which is the source of all their wickedness, and *cast him behind their backs*, despising his authority, and rejecting his government, he will lay upon them the punishment of their idolatries and lewdness, and make these to cease from among them; so that the remnant who are brought through this fiery furnace shall never return to idolatry again, as they never more did after the captivity. *Note*; (1.) They who share with the wicked in their sins may expect to share with them in their plagues. (2.) The cup of drunkenness will ever prove a cup of sorrow. (3.) They who by lewdness have made themselves vile, justly deserve

48 Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness.

49 And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

## C H A P. XXIV.

*Under the parable of a boiling pot is shewed the irrecoverable destruction of Jerusalem. By the sign of Ezekiel mourning for the death of his wife is shewed the calamity of the Jews to be beyond all sorrow.*

[Before Christ 590.]

**A** GAIN in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month,

to have their abominations discovered, and to be made the derision of every beholder.

4thly, After the account given of the wickedness of Judah and Israel, God appeals to the prophet, whether he ought any longer to plead for them, or whether he ought not in God's name to condemn them to the death that they had deserved.

1. He must declare unto them their abominations; and they were exceeding sinful.

[1.] Gross idolatry, which is spiritual adultery, the breach of the covenant between God and them.

[2.] The most unnatural murders, even the sacrificing of their own children to Moloch; so besotted were they, and mad upon their idols.

[3.] Horrid profanation of God's sanctuary. With the blood of innocents fresh upon them, that very day, with unhallowed feet and polluted lips, they dared appear before God in his temple, as if designing to affront him, or as if they thought with hypocritical services to impose upon him; and this they did in the midst of his house, setting up their idols even there, or without shame daring to appear among the foremost worshippers.

[4.] They profaned the sabbaths, not only by servile works, or taking their pleasures on that holy day; but by the worship of their idols, and the horrid sacrifices of their own children.

[5.] They courted the alliances of the heathen nations, the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans; received their ambassadors in great state and splendour, as a harlot attires and paints herself to meet her paramour; made them a noble entertainment; used the sacred incense to perfume the room, and the oil to anoint them, as a mark of peculiar honour; or perhaps, as some suspect, these were designed for the ambassador's use, to be employed in their idols' service. A great concourse of people also assembled to grace their public entrance; a multitude at ease, who flattered themselves that such great alliances must needs conduce to the security of the state. And besides the Jewish populace, a number of Sabeans from the desert swelled the cavalcade, or of drunkards, as in the margin

the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, Write thee the name of the day, even of this same day; the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day.

3 And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it:

4 Gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones.

5 Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, and make it

of our bibles, to drink healths, and huzza on this auspicious event; dressed up with bracelets on their hands, and crowns upon their heads, that they might make the most splendid appearance. God in vain admonished them of the folly, sin, and danger of such connections: they were grown old in adultery, and hardened against reproof. The alliance was concluded: Samaria first, and Jerusalem afterwards, as lewd and abandoned women, gladly received them, and joined in their idolatries. Note; (1.) The affectation of being on familiar terms with the great has been often a dangerous snare to men's souls. (2.) They who desert God for human confidences, however smiling their undertakings at first may appear, will find in the issue a lie in their right hand.

2. He must denounce against them God's wrath. The righteous men, they shall judge them; which some understand of the prophets of God, who foretold their doom, and passed sentence upon them; though others more probably apply it to the Babylonians, who were comparatively more righteous than they, and were appointed of God as the executioners of his righteous vengeance. Their crimes were capital, adulteries and murders manifold, and their punishment accordingly. A company at God's command, the Chaldean army, shall come, and seize and spoil them. Some shall be stoned, slain with the engines that battered the city; others dispatched with the sword; their sons and daughters murdered in their presence; their city and every house burnt with fire. Thus, by the utter ruin of the kingdom, the worship of idols should be utterly destroyed, and never more be restored; and all who beheld their ruin should be warned against their sins. With such wrath and destruction should their lewdness be recompensed, and the burden of their guilt and punishment be heavily laid upon them; so that if they will not be taught any other way, by their sufferings at least they shall be made to know that God is the Lord, true to his threatenings, and almighty to accomplish them. Note; (1.) The falls of others should be our warning. (2.) However sinners may flatter themselves, a day of recompence is near, when they will receive the wrath which they have provoked.

CHAP.

boil well, and let them scethe the bones of it therein.

6 ¶ Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it! bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it.

7 For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust;

8 That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance; I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered.

9 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great.

10 Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burned.

11 Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and *that* the filthiness of it may be molten in it, *that* the scum of it may be consumed.

12 She hath wearied *herself* with lies, and

her great scum went not forth out of her: her scum *shall be* in the fire.

13 In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.

14 I the LORD have spoken *it*: it shall come to pass, and I will do *it*; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord GOD.

15 ¶ Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

16 Son of man, Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.

17 Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not *thy* lips, and eat not the bread of men.

18 So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.

#### CHAP. XXIV.

*Ver. 3. Set on a pot*] The *pot* signifies Jerusalem, the *flesh* and *pieces* the citizens, and the *fire* and *water* the calamities which they were to suffer. When the subject required secrecy, the apologue was gradually changed by faint and far-fetched allusions into a parable, on set purpose to throw obscurity over the information. We find innumerable instances of this mode of speech in scripture, and this of the pot was one. In this manner was the parable employed both among the Orientals and Greeks; and thus the Jews understood it, as appears by the complaint of this prophet, chap. xx. 49. and by the denunciation of our Lord himself, Luke, viii. 9. and thus that great master of Grecian eloquence, Demetrius Phalereus, explains it. "The word is used, says he, as a covering and disguise to the discourse. Should it be objected, that the image employed by our prophet is low, we should recollect that he was likewise a priest; that he borrowed it from the sacred rites, by no means suspecting that what had a relation to the holy usages of the temple could ever be esteemed disgraceful or low. See Div. Leg. vol. iii. and Bithop Lowth's tenth Prelection.

*Ver. 4. Fill it with the choice bones*] And every choice part which cleaveth to the bones. Houbigant. The *bones*, says Calmet, signify the princes or chief citizens, and the *flesh* the common people.

*Ver. 6. Whose scum*] Whose rust; and so ver. 11, 12. Schult. and Houbigant. Instead of, *Bring it out piece by piece*, Houbigant reads, *Throw it in piece by piece.*

*Ver. 7. She poured it not upon the ground*] The words allude to the command of the law, that they should cover the blood of any beast or other living creature with dust: a precept intended not only to prevent their eating blood, but also to give them a kind of horror at seeing it shed. See Lowth.

*Ver. 10. And spice it well, &c.*] Dissolve its pieces. Houbigant. The Chaldee, explaining the metaphor, renders it thus: *Multiply kings, gather together an army, join auxiliaries, and prepare against her the soldiers; and her brave men shall grow mad.*

*Ver. 12. She hath wearied herself, &c.*] The LXX omit this clause. Houbigant renders it, *Her rust sticks close to her, and will not leave her. Her rust is great: it is offensive.*

*Ver. 13. In thy filthiness, &c.*] I had determined to cleanse thee, because thou wast unclean: but thou art not cleansed from thy filth, nor wilt thou be cleansed therefrom, till I, &c. Houbigant.

*Ver. 17. Forbear, &c.*] Groan silently; make no funeral mourning. This translation is agreeable to the famous saying of the poet,

*Cura leves loquuntur, graviore silent\*.*

Instead of the bread of men, Houbigant, in agreement with several of the versions, and many commentators, reads the *bread of mourners*. See Jer. xvi. 7.

\* Light cares are talkative; heavier cares are silent.



19 ¶ And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?

20 Then I answered them, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

21 Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword.

22 And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.

23 And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for

your iniquities, and mourn one toward another.

24 Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

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

26 That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears?

27 In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

*Ver. 23. Ye shall not mourn, &c.]* That is, "These terrible judgments upon your city and sanctuary shall strike you with such astonishment, and fill you with such poignant grief, as is too great to be expressed with tears or words." See on ver. 17.

*Ver. 25. And that whereupon, &c.]* And the ambition of their souls. This is called in the 21st verse, *that which your soul pitieth*, or, "that which you would have pitied and spared."

*Ver. 27. In that day, &c.]* "From this time, till the time the news arrives of the city's being taken, thou shalt not prophesy any more to thine own people. But then I will give thee a new commission, and thou shalt speak with freedom and plainness, not by signs and emblems, as thou dost at present; and they shall know that I am the Lord. Comparing the prediction with the event will convince the most obstinate, that the judgments inflicted come immediately from the Almighty." See Lowth.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The king of Babylon was now gone forth with his army, his designs a secret, probably, to all; but God knew whither his course was bent, and what he was doing; and, the very day that Jerusalem was invested, reveals it to the prophet, and bids him write it down, probably in some public register, that when the intelligence arrived, they might be confirmed in the divine authority by which he spake; since at so vast a distance none could have conveyed the tidings, had they not come immediately from God: and hereby they might be assured of the fulfilment of all his other predictions, particularly the destruction of Jerusalem, which they still flattered themselves should not be taken. To undeceive them, though a rebellious house, God gives them,

1. A sign: a boiling pot: see Jer. i. 13. filled with the best pieces of meat, with the choicest bones from the prime of the flock, and a fire continually fed, till the whole was thoroughly boiled together.

2. The explication of the sign or parable. The pot is Jerusalem, *the bloody city*, on which God denounces woe; the fire is God's wrath burning fierce and constant; the choice pieces are the great men of Jerusalem with their king; the bones, their strong warriors. These together must boil till their scum rises, intimating the wrath due to their provocations; and it is not gone out, they continuing impenitent under all their sufferings. Therefore God commands, *Bring it out piece by piece*: none of any age, sex, or station, must be spared: *let no lot fall upon it*, to save any from the general destruction. *Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh*; thoroughly boil it down, denoting the intenseness and continuance of the miseries which the besieged would undergo: *Spice it well*, or *make it savoury*, that the Chaldeans may greedily devour the prey; and *let the bones be burnt*, the men of war destroyed: *then set it empty upon the coals thereof*, that the brass of it may be hot and burn; the city, after the siege, being by Nebuchadrezzar's order burnt to the ground.

3. The justice of God in this destruction of Jerusalem is manifested: it is the just reward of her crimes, so black and enormous; because she hath shed openly and lavishly the blood of innocents; and, far from desiring to conceal her guilt, on the top of the rock it stood proclaimed, as if daring divine vengeance. Probably on these eminences they sacrificed their children; therefore God heard the cry, and awaked to judgment, and in righteous retaliation will pour out their blood on the top of a rock, executing them publicly as malefactors. Their scum, their filthy ways shall be consumed, since, instead of being led to repentance by what they had suffered, and the warnings God had given them, they hardened their hearts: like a pot which boils over, their scum running over into the fire, shall add fierceness to the flames, in which they will miserably perish. With lies, with idol vanities, or the false hopes which the prophets of Judah suggested, or the alliances that she had formed, she had wearied herself, disappointed of all her expectations, yet unhumiliated still, and obstinately

## C H A P. XXV.

*God's vengeance upon the Ammonites, upon Moab and Seir, upon Edom, and upon the Philistines, for their insulence against the Jews.*

[Before Christ 590.]

**T**HE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

obstinately persisting in her sins. *In thy filthiness is lewdness, a fixed and rooted delight in sin, and daring avowal of it; so that all the means used were ineffectual to reclaim her. I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged; therefore since the case was desperate, she is abandoned to ruin: she shall not be purged from her filthiness any more; no methods shall be used for her recovery, but God's fury shall rest upon her, without pity, and without repentance; according to her deeds he will recompense her in judgment, and his decree gone forth is irreversible; it shall surely come to pass.* *Note;* (1.) Blood will cry for vengeance, and daring sinners shall one day be made a spectacle to angels and to men. (2.) They who harden their hearts against the means that God uses for their conversion, must perish without remedy. (3.) It is most just to abandon those to their own lusts, who say unto the Almighty, Depart from us. (4.) The truth of God is engaged for the punishment of sinners: unless he prove a liar, they must lie down in everlasting burnings.

2dly, By another sign, which most nearly affected the prophet, the certain ruin of Jerusalem is foretold.

1. God will suddenly take from him the wife on whom he placed his fond affections, the desire of his eyes, with a stroke. *Note;* (1.) Those who are joined in marriage-bonds, should delight in each other, and study mutually to render themselves every day more amiable and desirable in each other's eyes. (2.) Death spares not the dearest relatives, and the suddenness of the stroke often renders the separation more grievous; but God's hand seen in the visitation, should reconcile us to his will: he gave, and, when he pleases, may justly resume his own gifts.

2. Ezekiel is forbidden to shew any symptom of grief and mourning, such as were natural and usual on these melancholy occasions. His tears must neither flow, however bitter his inward anguish; nor must he make any change, as was usual in such a case, in his attire; nor eat the bread of men, such as was sent to mourners by their friends during their first pangs of sorrow, when they were supposed inattentive to the calls of nature.

3. The prophet is all obedience. He spake to the people in the morning concerning this melancholy event, and at even his prediction was verified, *his wife died suddenly.* The next morning he appeared as usual, without expressing one symptom of his bitter sorrow, since so the Lord had commanded him. *Note;* (1.) Submission to God's will, however bitter the affliction, is not only our duty, but should be our delight. (2.) They who are put in trust with the Gospel, must shew a deadness to the world; not only to its inordinate cares, but they must also moderate their sorrows, as examples to others of humble resignation.

2 Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophecy against them;

3 And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and

4. Such a behaviour in the prophet naturally excited the people's inquiries into the cause; and, suspecting it was with a view to them, they desired to be informed of the meaning of his conduct, and he is ordered fully to explain it to them; Ezekiel is a sign unto them: as God had done to him, so would he shortly deal with them, and cause them to act in like manner. Their sanctuary, once their glory and boast, *the desire of their eyes,* (for though they had lost the power of godliness, they prided themselves in the temple,) *the excellency of their strength, on which they placed their chief confidence, and that which their soul pitied;* they could not think of its desolations without being deeply affected; *it shall be profaned,* given into the hands of the heathen, and utterly demolished by them; and their sons and daughters, the joy of their hearts, who were left from the pestilence and famine, shall fall by the Chaldean sword. And as Ezekiel had done, so should they do, shewing no token of grief, because so great, it would overwhelm them, and be too big for utterance: or not daring to complain, for fear of provoking their conquerors: or when all were involved in the common calamity, none would remain exempted to send the bread of mourners to their neighbours: nor could they make bare their feet, when forced to travel into a miserable captivity. Thus in silent anguish they should *pine away for their iniquities,* hardened in impenitence, and shut up in despair, and *mourn one toward another,* when they could privately meet together; not to bewail in penitence their sins, but to murmur and complain against God, and aggravate their miseries by their impatience under them. *Note;* (1.) Great griefs often stupify, and, finding no vent in tears, pent up they overwhelm the soul. (2.) They who mourn only for their sufferings, but not for their sins, shew their hearts to be yet hardened.

5. The event would shortly verify the prophetic word. The tidings of the dreadful catastrophe of the Jews would reach Babylon; some miserable fugitive would report how terribly Jerusalem fell; *her strength broken; her armies destroyed; her riches plundered; the temple, the joy of their glory, in which they placed especial confidence, destroyed; and their sons and daughters, on whom they had set their fond affections, the desire of their eyes, massacred by the Chaldean sword.* Then should the prophet's lips be opened, to converse with the messenger of these grievous tidings, and inquire into the particulars; and though from the time of this prophecy he *was dumb,* spake no more to the Jews, but turned himself to other nations; then his tongue shall be loosed again, to address them, and urge the punishments inflicted on the rebellious, according to the sign given them, as arguments for the repentance of the captives, who must *know* and own the truth and righteousness

against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity ;

4 Behold, therefore, I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk.

5 And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

6 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped *thine* hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel;

7 Behold, therefore, I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

8 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen;

9 Therefore, behold, I will open the side

of Moab from the cities, from his cities *which are* on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim,

10 Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations.

11 And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

12 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them;

13 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword.

14 And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel; and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord GOD.

15 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because

righteousness of God, manifested in the destruction of Jerusalem. *Note*; (1.) They who will not believe God's warnings, will at last be convinced of their truth by his judgments. (2.) When men set their minds on creature-comforts, God often punishes them in destroying their idols.

CHAP. XXV.

*Ver. 3. Because, &c.*] See ch. xxi. 28. The Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites, though nearly related to the Jews, bore them a constant hatred, and took all opportunities to shew it when they were under any distress; particularly, at the time of the general captivity, and the destruction of their city and temple. We have no distinct account of the accomplishment of these prophecies: the sacred writers content themselves with predicting, without declaring the event. But we learn from profane history, that Nebuchadrezzar subjected to his empire all Syria, Phœnicia, Arabia, and Egypt, and, consequently, the people spoken of in this chapter. See Calmet.

*Ver. 4. I will deliver thee to the men of the east*] That is, "To the Chaldeans, whose country lay east of the Ammonites." See the preceding note. Some suppose that the *Arabians* are meant, See Neh. iv. 7, 8. and the *Observations*, p. 51.

*Ver. 6. Clapped thine hands*] This was a sign of joy, which the other expression of *stamping with the feet* implies likewise.

*Ver. 8. Behold, the house of Judah is like, &c.*] It hence appears, that the Jews had boasted, and the Gentiles till

then acknowledged, that the Jews were under an extraordinary providence. See Div. Leg. vol. iv.

*Ver. 9. I will open the side, &c.*] *I will open the side of Moab, laying bare the cities in his borders, the beautiful country of Beth-jeshimoth, &c.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 12. Because that Edom, &c.*] See Pf. cxxxvii. 7. Houbigant renders the passage, *Because Edom hath burned with rage against the house of Judah, and hath revenged himself upon them by wickedness, &c.*

*Ver. 15. Because the Philistines have dealt, &c.*] *Because the Philistines have burned with hatred, and have revenged themselves through contempt, and their ancient malice, in order to destroy;* Houbigant. See Jer. xxv. 20. xlvii. 1, &c. Amos, i. 6. 2 Chron. xxviii. 18.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The Ammonites, the implacable enemies of the Jewish people, are the first of the Gentile nations to be reckoned with. The Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel, declares their provocations, and denounces their doom.

1. Their crime was, the malicious pleasure they took in seeing God's Israel ruined. They beheld with delight the profanations of the sanctuary, and exulted in the desolations and captivity of the people; expressing the rancour and despite of their hearts by their outward gestures, clapping their hands, leaping, for those miseries, which the least humanity would have taught them to pity. *Note*; (1.) The enmity of the natural heart against the professors of religion, is sure to express itself on their falls

the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred;

16 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea-coasts.

17 And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.

### CHAP. XXVI.

*Tyrus, for insulting against Jerusalem, is threatened. The power of Nebuchadnezzar against her. The mourning and astonishment of the sea, at her fall.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**A**ND it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first *day* of the month,

or misfortunes. (2.) God observes and will severely visit the malice and rancour shewn by the enemies of his believing people.

2. Their punishment for this insolent carriage will be their utter destruction. *The men of the east*, the Chaldeans, or the Arabians who were in Nebuchadnezzar's army, and afterwards possessed the country; they shall seize their land for a *possession*, set up their palaces therein, and dwell there, feasting on their spoil, their fruits, and their milk. Rabbah, the metropolis, shall be turned into a *stable for camels*, and the country feed the flocks of their conquerors. God's stretched-out arm shall make an end of them, cut them off from being any longer a people, and cause them to perish from the earth; and in this terrible destruction make his own great name known as the avenger of his people's wrongs.

2dly, Three other guilty nations are called to God's bar to hear their doom. Their crimes and their punishments are nearly similar.

#### 1. The Moabites.

[1.] Their crime was, delight in the sins and sufferings of the Jews. They say, *Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen*; perfect apostates from their God, and wholly given to idolatry, and, as the consequence thereof, fallen into the hands of the Babylonians; and no distinction subsisting between them and others, of which they used to boast. *Note*; (1.) Apostates from God's worship give the adversaries great occasion to blaspheme. (2.) Though the same event happen to the righteous and the wicked, yet God knows how to put a vast difference between them.

[2.] The punishment of Moab would be, to become a prey to the same invaders as had destroyed the country of Ammon: their defences ruined; their country laid open; and their capital cities, their glory, demolished. Thus should they fall as the Ammonites their neighbours, whose

*that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken *that was* the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished *now* she is laid waste:

3 Therefore; thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up.

4 And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock.

5 It shall be a *place* for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD: and it shall become a spoil to the nations.

names would be lost among the nations; and by these judgments which God executes, his power, his wrath, and the truth of his threatenings, would be known unto them.

#### 2. The Edomites.

[1.] They not only, as their neighbours of Moab and Ammon, beheld and rejoiced in the fall of Judæa; but they remembered the old grudge between Jacob and Esau, their subjection by David, and their chastisement by Amaziah; and now embraced the favourable moment to execute their cruel revenge upon the poor afflicted people; at which God is *highly* and justly *offended*. *Note*; Whatever provocations we have received, it is highly criminal to entertain malice, or to revenge ourselves: this is God's prerogative; *Vengeance is mine*.

[2.] God will punish them severely: from north to south the ravages of the Chaldeans shall spread, and man and beast be cut off by the out-stretched arm of the Lord: and when afterwards they returned from their captivity, and began to recover themselves, God will lay vengeance upon them by the hand of his people Israel; which was fulfilled under the Maccabees, 1 Mac. v. 3, and Hircanus, as Josephus relates, subdued and made them tributaries. Thus will the Lord pour out his anger and fury upon them, and make them know by what they feel, against what a God of omnipotence and justice they have offended.

3. The Philistines. Their sin and punishment are nearly similar. With a despiteful heart they seized this opportunity of taking vengeance for the old grudge that they bore the Jews: but they shall suffer for it: God's arm of vengeance shall espouse his people's quarrel; their mighty men shall perish, their maritime cities be destroyed, and with furious rebukes they shall be made to know, that Israel's God is above all gods; and be made to confess his righteous judgments.

CHAP.

6 And her daughters which *are* in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

7 ¶ For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people.

8 He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field: and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee.

9 And he shall set engines of war against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break down thy towers.

10 By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee: thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots, when he shall enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach.

11 With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground.

12 And they shall make a spoil of thy riches,

and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water.

13 And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard.

14 And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a *place* to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD.

15 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD to Tyrus; Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee?

16 Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their brodered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at *every* moment, and be astonished at thee.

17 And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed, *that wast* inhabited of seafaring men,

CH A P. XXVI.

*Ver. 1. In the first day of the month.] The first month, the first day of the month. Houbigant. See chap. xx. 1.*

*Ver. 2. She is broken, &c.] She is broken: the commerce of the people is turned unto me. She who was full of citizens is laid waste. Houbigant. See ch. xxvii. 3. Tyre was noted for her commerce; so that when Jerusalem was taken, the spoil of the city was carried thither for sale, and several of the inhabitants who were made captives were sold there as slaves. Those who follow our Translation suppose, that Jerusalem is called the gates of the people, because of the great confluence both of Jews and proselytes to that city from all parts at the solemn festivals. See Isai. xxiii. Jer. xxv. 22. xlvii. 4: Amos, i. 9. Zech. ix. 2.*

*Ver. 3. As the sea, &c.] They shall be as loud, as numerous, as irresistible, as the waves of the sea. This is one of the beautiful and expressive images which occur in the magnificent prophecy here recorded.*

*Ver. 4 I will also scrape her dust from her.] I will brush away the dust out of her, and reduce her to a dry rock: Houbigant: an allusion to the custom in Palestine of fertilizing particular spots by carrying mould to them from other places less eligible for the purpose of sowing or planting. Chandler renders the last clause, I will make thee as a shining or barren rock; that is to say, as appears by the context, "Strip thee of thy riches, pride, power, inhabitants, palaces; so that thou shalt be as bare as a rock*

" which hath nothing on it, and is of no other use than " for the spreading and drying of nets." See ver. 14. and Pl. lxxviii. 6.

*Ver. 6. And her daughters which are in the field.] By the daughters of Tyre are meant the lesser towns, which were under her jurisdiction; for Tyre was very powerful, and ruled over the greater part of Phœnicia.*

*Ver. 7. Nebuchadrezzar, &c.] " This is the title which " these princes shall assume, as well as their successors, " the kings of Persia."*

*Ver. 12. And they shall lay, &c.] The ruins of old Tyre contributed much to the taking of the new city; for with the stones, timber, and rubbish of it, Alexander built a bank or causey from the continent to the island; thereby literally fulfilling the words of the prophet. He was seven months in completing this work: but the time and labour were well employed, for by means hereof he was enabled to take and storm the city. See Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, vol. i. and the note on ver. 21.*

*Ver. 16, 17. Then all the princes of the sea, &c.] That is, " All the princes and rich merchants of Sidon, Carthage, " and other maritime cities, who traded with Tyre, shall " express a deep concern for her misfortune." Houbigant reads the 17th verse thus, How is she destroyed, who hath been so long inhabited! the renowned city, whose defence was the sea, and whose citizens struck terror upon all who inhabit the earth! Tyre was famous for the strength of its situation, which*

the renowned city, which wast strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror *to be* on all that haunt it!

18 Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that *are* in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure.

19 For thus saith the Lord God; When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee;

20 When I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of the living;

21 I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: though thou be fought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God.

was on the sea-shore; but the insular Tyre, as well as that on the continent, is included in this prophecy. They are both spoken of as one and the same city; part built on the continent, and part on an adjoining island. See Bishop Newton's Dissertations, vol. i.

Ver. 18. *Now shall the isles tremble*] *Now the people are terrified at thy overthrow: Yea the isles of the sea are troubled at thy destruction.* Houbigant.

Ver. 19. *I shall bring up the deep upon thee*] *I will raise against thee a mole of waters.* Houbigant.

Ver. 20. *And I shall set glory, &c.*] *Nor shalt thou be, or continue in the land of the living.* Houbigant.

Ver. 21. *I will make thee a terror*] These prophecies, like most others, were to receive their accomplishment by degrees. Nebuchadrezzar destroyed the old city, and Alexander employed the ruins and rubbish in making his causeway from the continent to the island, which henceforward were joined together. Bishop Poccocke hence observes, "It is no wonder that there are no signs of the ancient city; and as it is a sandy shore, the face of every thing is altered; and the great aqueduct in many places is almost buried in the sand." So that as to this part of the city, the prophecy has literally been fulfilled: *Thou shalt be built no more, &c.* ver. 14. It may be questioned, whether the new city ever after that arose to that height of glory, power, wealth, and greatness to which it was elevated in the time of Isaiah and Ezekiel. It received a great blow from Alexander, not only by his taking and burning the city, but much more by his building Alexandria in Egypt, which in time deprived it of much of its trade, and thereby contributed more effectually to its ruin. It had the misfortune afterwards of changing its masters often, being sometimes in the hands of the Ptolemies, and sometimes of the Seleucidæ, till at length it fell under the dominion of the Romans. It was taken by the Saracens about the year of Christ 639, in the reign of Omar: it was retaken by the Christians in the year 1124. From the Christians it was taken again, in the year 1289, by the Mamelucs of Egypt, under the sultan Alphix, who sacked and rased this and Sidon, and other strong towns, that they might not afford any harbour to the Christians. From the Mamelucs it was taken again in the year 1516, by Selim, the ninth emperor of the Turks, and under their dominion it continues at present. But, alas! how fallen! for, from being the centre of trade, frequented by all the merchant-ships of the east and west, it is now become a heap of ruins, visited only by the boats of a few fishermen. So that as to this part

likewise of the city the prophecy has been literally fulfilled: *I will make thee like the top of a rock, &c.* Let us now hear what travellers have to say concerning the completion of this prophecy. Hadrianus Parvellerius, a Jesuit, who resided ten years in Syria, has related, that when he approached the ruins of Tyre, and beheld the rocks stretched forth to the sea, and the great stones scattered up and down the shore made clean and smooth by the sun, and waves, and winds, and useful only for the drying of fishermen's nets, many of which happened at that time to be spread thereon, it brought to his memory the 5th and 14th verses of this chapter, *I will make thee, &c.* Dr. Shaw, in his account of Tyre, expresses himself thus: "I visited several creeks and inlets, to discover what provisions might have been formerly made for the security of their vessels; yet I could not perceive the least token of their *colbon* or harbour, that could have been of any extraordinary capacity: so that there must have been some other station than this. In the north-north-east part likewise of the city, we see the traces of a safe and commodious basin, which is scarce forty yards in diameter. Yet even this port is so choked up with sand and rubbish, that the boats of those poor fishermen, who now and then visit this once-renowned emporium, can with great difficulty be only admitted." Mr. Maundrell is fullest to our purpose. "This city, (says he) standing in the sea upon a peninsula, promises at a distance something very magnificent: but when you come to it you find no similitude of that glory for which it was so renowned in ancient times. On the north side is an old Turkish ungarrisoned castle; besides which you see nothing but a mere Babel of broken walls, pillars, vaults, &c. there being not so much as one entire house left. Its present inhabitants are only a few wretches, harbouring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly upon fishing; who seem to be preserved in this place by Divine Providence, as a visible argument, how God has fulfilled his word concerning Tyre, that it should be as the top of a rock; a place for fishers to dry their nets on." See Bishop Newton's Dissert. vol. i. p. 344.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The same year Jerusalem was destroyed, this prophecy was delivered. We have,

1. The joy that the Tyrians took in the ruin of Judah, and the hopes of advantage which they conceived would accrue to them from her fall. Jerusalem had been the gates of the people, much frequented, a place of great trade, but was

## C H A P. XXVII.

*The rich supply of Tyrus: the great and irrecoverable fall thereof.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**T**HE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

2 Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus;

3 And say unto Tyrus, O thou that art

was now broken down; and they hoped that all the commerce which had been carried on there would be transferred to them, and that they should be replenished, both with people who might fly thither, or with captives, and the spoil sold by the conquerors. *Note;* It is very sinful to be pleased with the death or misfortunes of those who were our rivals in trade, or whose fall is our advantage; and the envy and covetousness which appear herein, God will assuredly remember and punish.

2. God threatens to visit Tyre for her iniquity. *I am against thee;* and he is more to be feared than innumerable hosts. At his beck, and under his guidance, the king of Babylon shall besiege the city with an immense army, raging like the waves of the sea: the dust raised by the multitude of his cavalry shall obscure the skies as a thick cloud, and his military engines shake down the walls, till at the breach his troops shall enter, and spread desolation on every side. *Her daughters shall be slain with the sword;* either the cities and people of the continent subject to Tyre; or so terrible should be the massacre when the city was taken, that not even the women should be spared; her *garrisons beat to the ground;* the statues of her strength, the images of her idols, on whom she placed her confidence, trodden under foot; the very pavements broken with the prancings of the horses: the rich merchandize becomes a prey to the besiegers; the walls are razed; the whole city is laid in ruins; the very dust is scraped off, and made bare as the top of a rock. Deserted now, no songs of mirth, no music, shall be heard any more in her; nor shall she ever be rebuilt, at least not on the same spot, or be restored to her former splendour, but remain a desert waste, as the top of a rock; a place for fishermen to dry their nets; which, according to the reports of those who have been there, is to this day literally true of Tyre, since its final destruction. God hath spoken it, and therefore the fulfilment is sure; and in these judgments he will make himself terribly known to them.

2dly, The dreadful ruin of Tyre is farther described.

1. The islands of the sea, terrified with her fall, will quake for fear; their princes, descending from their thrones, with expressions of deepest sorrow shall mourn over her desolations, while they tremble in expectation of sharing her fate. They shall take up their lamentation, astonished how such a glorious city could be destroyed, and weeping over the mighty fallen. Once so renowned had Tyre been; *strong in the sea;* fortified by the waves as bulwarks, and filled with mariners, the most expert and bold; the terror of all that ploughed the main: she reigned

situate at the entry of the sea, *which art a merchant of the people for many isles,* Thus saith the Lord GOD; O Tyrus, thou hast said, *I am of perfect beauty.*

4 Thy borders *are* in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty.

5 They have made all thy *ship-boards* of fir-trees of Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee.

the unrivalled mistress of the ocean; but now was deserted and desolate; the people departed into captivity; the city, with its inhabitants, sunk under the waters; demolished by the army of the Chaldeans, rushing with resistless fury upon them, and bringing them down to the sides of the pit with those who have been long dead. Yea, so total and intire shall be the overthrow, that scarcely the vestiges shall remain. So weak is human strength, so fading is human greatness; so tottering are the foundations of the strongest cities: if we would dwell abidingly in safety, we must look above the earth for that better city whose maker and builder is God.

2. The Lord will do this. *I will make thee a terror;* his hand shall be visible in their ruin; and his design in her fall is to give her neighbours warning, that, terrified with her destruction, they may avoid her sins.

3. The restoration of Israel, over whom she triumphed, shall aggravate the irreparable ruin of Tyre. *I shall set glory in the land of the living;* in Israel, whither many souls, spiritually alive to God, should return from the captivity; and God will exalt and distinguish them with his love, favour, and protection. *Note;* (1.) The church of God's believing people is the land of the living; blessed and happy are they who have their portion therein. (2.) The joy and glory of the saints in heaven will aggravate the torments of the damned in hell, when they behold the bliss from which they are eternally excluded, and gnash with rage and despair.

## C H A P. XXVII.

*Ver. 2. Take up a lamentation, &c.]* This alludes to the melancholy songs used at funerals, concerning which we spoke in our comment on the Lamentations; and wherein the women recounted every thing which was valuable or praise-worthy in the deceased, and then lamented his loss. Though indeed the prophet dwells more upon the punishment denounced against this place, than in deploring its calamity, and rather excites terror than pity; yet, notwithstanding this, he follows the plan and manner of those funeral dirges. For he recounts, as is usual in those compositions, the former glory, power, and riches of Tyre, and, by means of the contrast, augments the greatness of her calamities. See Bishop Lowth's 23d Prelection.

*Ver. 3. Which art a merchant, &c.]* Which joinest people by commerce through many isles. Houbigant; who renders the beginning of the next verse, *Thy borders extend even to the middle of the sea.*

*Ver. 5. Thy ship-boards—of Senir]* Senir is the ancient name for Hermon. See Deut. iii. 9.

*Masts]*



6 Of the oaks of Basban have they made thine oars; the company of the Ashurites have made thy benches of ivory, brought out of the isles of Chittim.

7 Fine linen with broidered work from Egypt was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail; blue and purple from the isles of Elishah was that which covered thee.

8 The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wife men, O Tyrus, that were in thee, were thy pilots.

9 The ancients of Gebal and the wise men thereof were in thee thy calkers: all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise.

10 They of Persia and of Lud and of Phut were in thine army, thy men of war: they hanged the shield and helmet in thee; they set forth thy comeliness.

11 The men of Arvad with thine army were upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadims were in thy towers: they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about; they have made thy beauty perfect.

12 Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs.

13 Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market.

14 They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses and horsemen and mules.

15 The men of Dedan were thy merchants; many isles were the merchandise of thine hand: they brought thee for a present horns of ivory and ebony.

16 Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate.

17 Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm.

18 Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool.

19 Dan also and Javan going to and fro occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in thy market.

20 Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots.

*Mafts*] Though cedars have a thick and not a lofty trunk, mafts consisting of different parts may be made of different cedars duly sized, or properly shaped if of too large a size.

*Ver. 6. Of the oaks of Basban*] Bishop Newton observes upon this description of Tyre, that Cleopatra, sailing down the river Cydnus to meet Mark Antony, was not attended with greater finery and magnificence; nor have historians and poets painted the one in more lively colours than the prophet the other. Instead of, *The company of the Ashurites, &c.* Houbigant reads, *They have made thy seats of ivory, inclosed in box, brought from the Italian islands.*

*Ver. 7. Isles of Elishah*] Isles of Greece. It is remarkable that part of Peloponnesus was named *Elis* among the Grecian writers. *Gebal* in the ninth verse was a province of Phœnicia, near Tyre.

*Ver. 10. Of Lud, and of Phut*] Or, *Of Ethiopia, and of Mauritania, or Africa.* Houbigant renders the latter part of the verse, *They hanged the shield and the helmet upon thy walls, and added to thy comeliness.* See the next verse.

*Ver. 11. Gammadims*] Tutelar images. Spencer. Fuller supposes these *Gammadims* to have been Phœnicians. The Hebrew word גַּמְדִּים *gammadim* is derived from גָּמַד *gamad*, which signifies to be contracted, narrowed, &c. and Parkhurst

is of opinion, that these people were the inhabitants of the country about Tripoli in Syria, formerly called the *Αγχων* or *Elbow* of Phœnicia, from its being narrowed, and projecting into the sea in that form. See Parkhurst on the word גָּמַד *gamad*.

*Ver. 12. Tarshish*] Or, *Tartessus.* Michaelis thinks that there was only the Spanish Tarshish; and that ships sailed to it from Ezion-geber round Africa. *Spic. Geogr.* Spain was anciently remarkable for silver mines. *Plin. l. xxxiii. c. vi.*

*Ver. 13. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech*] Greece, the Tibareni, and Moschi, [situated near the Euxine sea] the associates of thy merchandize, bring to thy marts slaves and brazen vessels. Houbigant.

*Ver. 14. Togarmah—horses—horsemen*] Or, *Cappadocia—common horses,—war horses.* The men of Dedan, in the next verse, probably means the Arabians.

*Ver. 16. Coral and agate*] Silk, and rubies, or crystal.

*Ver. 17. Wheat of Minnith, &c.*] Wheat, flax, balsam, honey, oil, and resin. Houbigant. See Parkhurst on the word פַּנָּג *pannag*.

*Ver. 18. Wine of Helbon, and white wool*] Helbon is now Aleppo.

*Ver. 19. Cassia and Calamus*] Storax, and sweet cane.

*Ver.*

21 Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in these *were they* thy merchants.

22 The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they *were* thy merchants: they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold.

23 Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Ashhur, and Chilmad *were* thy merchants.

24 These *were* thy merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes, and broidered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among thy merchandise.

25 The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market: and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.

26 ¶ Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas.

27 Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that *are* in thee, and in all thy company which *is* in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin.

28 The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots.

29 And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land;

30 And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes:

31 And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing.

32 And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, *saying*, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?

33 When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise.

34 In the time *when* thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, thy merchandise and all thy company in the midst of thee shall fall.

35 All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be fore afraid, they shall be troubled in *their* countenance.

36 The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more.

Ver. 23. *Canneh*] Houbigant and Grotius both read *Calane*; for the neighbouring places are nearly the same as in Genesis, ch. x.

Ver. 26. *Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters*] This is a proper allegory, says Bishop Warburton, with only one real sense; and it is managed by the prophet with that brevity and expedition which a proper allegory demands, when used in the place of a metaphor. He is here speaking of Tyre under the image of a ship. Houbigant renders the verse, *They who shall spoil thee, shall bring thee into many waters; and a vehement wind shall break thee in the midst of the seas*. This alludes to the destruction of Tyre by the Chaldeans. Grotius refers to Horace, Od. lib. i. xiv.

Ver. 28. *The suburbs shall shake*] *The neighbouring places*. Houbigant.

Ver. 32. *What city is like Tyrus, &c.*] *What city was like Tyre, throughout the seas*. Houbigant.

Ver. 36. *The merchants—shall hiss at thee*] The Chaldee renders it, *They shall be astonished*; and this sense agrees better with the lamentations of the sea-faring-men spoken of in the preceding verses. See Jer. xix. 8. l. 13.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though Tyre was a heathen land, the prophet must make lamentation over it; for a gracious heart is filled with universal charity, and, touched with tender sympathy, laments over the miseries of the afflicted, wherever they appear.

We have,

1. The great prosperity of Tyre, which made her fall the more grievous.

[1.] She was most conveniently situated, *at the entry of the sea*, and surrounded by it, her harbour most commodious, and the grand mart of the world, whither all the produce of the east and the west was brought and exchanged.

[2.] The city was most beautifully adorned with noble structures, where magnificence, elegance, and use contributed to *perfect her beauty*.

[3.] Her fleets were numerous, admirably built and rigged, and some most superbly adorned; the very sails *fine linen embroidered from Egypt*; the pavilions covered *with blue and purple*; and the very benches inlaid *with ivory*.

[4.] Her ships were excellently *manned*; the *pilots* and chief

## C H A P. XXVIII.

*God's judgment upon the prince of Tyrus, for his sacrilegious pride. A lamentation of his great glory corrupted by sin. The judgment of Zidon. The restoration of Israel.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**T**HE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart *is* lifted up, and thou hast said, *I am* a god, I sit *in* the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou *art* a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God:

3 Behold, thou *art* wiser than Daniel; there

is no secret that they can hide from thee:

4 With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures:

5 By thy great wisdom *and* by thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches:

6 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God;

7 Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness.

8 They shall bring thee down to the pit,

chief officers Tyre supplied; the seamen, the adjacent country; and in her docks the wisest artificers were employed to refit and repair her navy.

[5.] The choicest soldiery were hired for her guard, from distant martial nations, furnished with weapons for war, which in time of peace were hung up in armouries, ready to be used on any emergency, affording at once safety and ornament to the city.

[6.] Her trade was vast and universal: ships from all quarters of the globe crowded her harbour. The nations, and the several commodities of their commerce, are mentioned. The countries of many of these are well known; but some of them are uncertain, which only afford the critics scope for conjecture; but of such immaterial points we may well be content to remain ignorant. Observe, however, the vast advantages of trade, what an intercourse it opens, and brings in the produce of the most distant lands, with as great plenty as if it had been the native growth of our own soil: but with increasing wealth increasing luxury usually rushes in, and the seeds of ruin are often springing up in the midst of the greatest prosperity.

2. Tyre prided herself on her beauty, and all nations praised and extolled her. Thus is wealth often the food of vanity: and they who abound in riches are cried up and praised. The *great*, as such, are usually much more noticed and honoured than the *good*.

2dly, The greatness of her wealth and excellence serves but to increase the misery of her fall. Behold this proud city laid low in ruins; a monument to other trading nations not to be secure in the day of prosperity.

3. Like a rich vessel wrecked by the unskilfulness of the rowers, so was Tyre brought into great waters, exposed by some imprudent conduct of her governors to the resentment of the king of Babylon, the east wind, that dashed this gallant ship to pieces in the midst of the seas; and her merchandize, riches, inhabitants, soldiers, and seamen, perished in the waters. Thus has the unskilfulness of her pilots often ruined a nation.

2. The dreadful cries of the sinking city shall reach the

*suburbs*, the cities and villages on the continent; and the few who escape to the shore, as men from a shipwreck, shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, blaming the imprudent conduct of the pilots, who provoked the king of Babylon's resentment; or for thee, bewailing the desolations they beheld, with deepest expressions of anguish and vexation, with dust on their heads, wallowing in ashes, tearing off their hair, and weeping with bitterness and heart-felt grief, bemoaning in plaintive lamentations the dire catastrophe; a city, once so great, so rich, so joyous, replenishing with her merchandize the kings of the earth, now fallen into the lowest state of abject wretchedness, and, instead of the busy hum of crowded streets, solitude and silence reigning throughout. So awful a change can God in judgment quickly make, when his wrath arises against a guilty land.

3. The utter ruin of this proud city shall fill many with terror and astonishment; the kings of the neighbouring isles shall be sore afraid. If Tyre could not stand, which they deemed impregnable, how should they? Others shall hiss at her, mocking her vain confidence, and hoping, as she had done on the ruin of Jerusalem, that the trade of Tyre shall be transferred to their ports, and they shall be enriched thereby: for, being thus fallen, she never shall be any more; never rebuilt on the same spot, or rise to the same empire of the seas. Some think this means no more than a long time, during seventy years, see Isa. xxiii. 15. 17. though the prophecy may respect her last destruction, since which to this day she has lain in ruins. The commerce and fall of the antichristian powers are described in expressions borrowed from this prophecy, or exactly similar, see Rev. xviii. for their ruin shall as assuredly come.

## C H A P. XXVIII.

*Ver. 2. I am a god*] These words are an insolent boast of self-sufficiency; as if he had said, "I neither fear any prince, nor stand in need of any assistance; I am seated in a place of impregnable strength; the seas surround me; I am freed from the assaults of an enemy." See Isa. xxiii, 9. and Lowth.

*Ver.*

and thou shalt die the deaths of *them that are slain* in the midst of the seas.

9 Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, *I am God*; but thou shalt be a man, and no god, in the hand of him that slayeth thee.

10 Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers; for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD.

11 ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone *was* thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the

emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

14 Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee *so*: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

15 Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

*Ver. 8. Thou shalt die, &c.]* "Thou shalt die the deaths of those who perished in the flood:" *deaths*, in the plural, as intimating a still farther punishment even after death; such as that impious race experienced, and such as this haughty prince had well deserved by his mad pride and blasphemous impiety. And therefore with the same emphasis the prophet says, *ver. 10. Thou shalt die the deaths*, the double death, *of the uncircumcised*;—that is, of unbelievers and enemies to God. This is not the only place in this prophecy where the destruction by the deluge is alluded to: for this, and the fall of angels, being two of the greatest events that ever happened, and the most remarkable of God's judgments; it is very natural for the prophets to recur to them, when they would raise their style in the description of the fall of empires and of tyrants. Thus we find a very beautiful allusion to both those great events in this same prediction of our prophet, of the downfall of Tyre and its haughty prince in the 26th and following chapter. As the style of this prophet is wonderfully adapted to the subject of which he treats, he compares the destruction of this famous maritime city to a vessel shipwrecked in the sea, and so sends them *to the people of old time*, as he calls them, chap. xxvi. 20. (where it should certainly be so rendered) who were swallowed up in the universal deluge. Their prince he compares to the prince of the rebel angels, whose pride had given him such a dreadful fall. See chap. xxvi. 18—20. xxvii. 26. See Peters on Job, p. 373. and the note on *ver. 14*. Instead of, *Them that are slain*, Houbigant reads, *Them who are wounded*.

*Ver. 12. Thou sealest up, &c.]* *Thou seal of likeness, full, &c.* Houbigant. The prophet compares the king of Tyre to a valuable seal-ring worn on the finger.

*Ver. 13. Thou hast been in Eden, &c.]* *Thou wast as Eden, &c.* Houbigant. "As thy situation was pleasant, so wast thou plentifully supplied with every thing which could contribute to render thy life agreeable." A state of paradise, in the common acceptation, denotes a condition

every way complete and happy. But this expression alludes to the felicity which Adam enjoyed in paradise before his fall. There is something, says Mr. Peters, in this prophecy of Ezekiel, which might incline one to think, that the garden of Eden, or paradise, was become by this time, with the Jews, the happy seat of good souls in their state of separation; for, describing the pride and vanity of the prince of Tyre, and his boasted happiness, he expresses it by this phrase, *Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God*; as blessed and happy in thine own imagination, as the first man, in *paradise*, shall we say?—or rather (for he seems to speak of it as a state of felicity still subsisting somewhere) as good souls in the regions of the blessed, the celestial paradise. This last seems the more probably to be the meaning, because the prophet ascends a step higher in the following verse, and places this ambitious prince where he had placed himself in his own thoughts, among the angels of God, and that in the superior orders. *Thou art the anointed cherub, &c.* Nay, we are told, *ver. 2*. that his heart was so lifted up as to say, *I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas*. See Dissert. p. 399. Instead of, *Prepared in thee*, we may read, *Prepared for thee*.

*Ver. 14—16. Thou art the anointed cherub, &c.]* Peters observes upon these verses, that the king of this proud city, who it seems affected divine honours, is compared to an anointed cherub, or one of the chiefs and rulers of the angelical host, thus remarkably described, as one that *wast perfect in his ways from the day that he was created, till iniquity was found in him*. *Ver. 15*. one who had his place of residence *upon the holy mountain of God, and walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire*, or among the stars. *But now to be cast down, &c.* See *ver. 16*. Whoever compares this place in Ezekiel with the parallel place in *Isai. xiv. 12, &c.* where the downfall of the king of Babylon is foretold in the same prophetic language, will soon perceive that they throw a reciprocal light upon each other; and that the fall of angels is alluded to in both. The beauty and propriety of these allusions of the prophets will appear

S f with

17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

18 Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick: therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

19 All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

20 ¶ Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

21 Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it,

22 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her.

23 For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

24 ¶ And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all *that are* round about them, that

with greater lustre, when it is considered that the host of heaven were the objects of the heathen idolatry; both the visible and invisible host, as well angels, as the lights of heaven; for the superstition seems to have been originally the same, as the worship of the heavenly bodies terminated in the worship of those angels or intelligencies who were believed to animate and conduct them: and hence we see a reason why the angels are called *stars* and *morning stars* in Scripture; as in Job, xxxviii. 7. and so here the *covering cherub* is the same with *Lucifer, son of the morning*, in Isaiah. Thus, while the prophets describe the overthrow of an idolatrous prince or state by a fallen angel, or a falling star, they only make their gods to tumble with them. See Dissert. on Job, p. 374. Houbigant renders the 16th verse, *From the multitude of thy merchandize, the midst of thee hath been filled with iniquity, and thou art become guilty. Therefore will I cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God, and I will take thee, O cherub, and thy shadow away from the midst of the sparkling stones.*

Ver. 18. *Therefore will I bring forth a fire, &c.*] This was verified by Alexander the Great, who besieged, took, and set the city on fire. See Bishop Newton's Prophecies, vol. i.

Ver. 24. *And there shall be no more a pricking brier*] Nor shall the house of Israel have any more in all her neighbours who despise her, a pricking brier, or tormenting thorn. Houbigant. That is to say, "My people shall dwell quietly and securely in their own land, when the rest of their wicked neighbours are destroyed, who continually vexed them, and were as so many thorns in their sides." The following verse shews, that this promise relates chiefly to the general restoration of the Jews, when all the enemies of truth and of the church of the Almighty are vanquished. See Lowth and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prince of Tyre is next the subject of the prophetic word. Distinct from the general ruin of his country, a particular warning is given to him.

1. His pride was excessive. *His heart was lifted up in high conceit of his own excellence, as if he could rival the*

monarch of the universe: he said, *I am a god*, boasted himself as a deity, and perhaps expected divine honours should be paid him. His throne seemed to be fixed firm as that of the Most High, and as glorious *in the midst of the seas*, which owned his sovereign sway. But he is told, *Thou art a man, and not God*, a poor, dependent, dying worm; *though thou set thine heart as the heart of God*, thinking his wisdom and dominion great as those of the eternal Jehovah, and himself as worthy to be feared, obeyed, and worshipped. Two things particularly he valued himself upon. [1.] His wisdom. *Thou art wiser than Daniel*, in his own opinion at least. The fame of Daniel had perhaps reached even to Tyre, as the most remarkable person for wisdom of all the wise men of the East: but the king of Tyre fancied that he far excelled him, and, with penetration approaching omniscience, would have it believed, *there was no secret that could be hid from him*. Thus often do we see knowledge puffed up, and the most precious gifts of God perverted to his dishonour. [2.] His wealth. By his wisdom he planned his schemes of commerce, and, riches flowing in as a river upon him, every acquisition filled his mind with loftier imaginations of his own importance: he ascribed his gains, not to God's providence, but his own prudence; and fancied himself thereby exalted above all danger. The boasts of antichrist, 2 Thess. ii. 4. are expressed nearly in the same language, of whom the prince of Tyre is the type and figure.

2. His doom is read. He boasted himself a god, but he must die as a man. The Chaldeans, *the terrible of the nations*, from a strange land shall come, and with drawn swords demolish the force of Tyre, defile her beauty, and lay all her proud palaces in the dust; and this vain prince, far from finding respect shewn to that majesty which he counted sacred, shall go to an ignominious grave, like those who are in a sea-fight slain and cast overboard without ceremony, a prey for fishes; and, worse still, he shall die under the curse of God, *the deaths of the uncircumcised*, eternally undone and lost. And sure is the doom pronounced, since the God of truth hath spoken it.

3. This will silence his arrogant pretensions. Such vengeance

despised them; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.

25 Thus saith the Lord GOD; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob.

26 And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise

them round about them; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God.

## CHAP. XXIX.

*The judgment of Pharaoh for his treachery to Israel. The desolation of Egypt. The restoration thereof after forty years. Egypt the reward of Nebuchadrezzar. Israel shall be restored.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**I**N the tenth year, in the tenth month, in the twelfth day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

vengeance executed upon him will prove his frailty and vanity; and his boasts of godlike power and wisdom will vanish, when, in the hands of his murderers, he shall be found a weak and helpless worm. *Note;* Death, at farthest, will make the proudest know that they are but men.

2dly, We have a lamentation over the prince of Tyrus.

1. He was, to appearance, raised to the highest pitch of human prosperity. *Thou sealest up the sun, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty,* complete in every accomplishment of mind and person, and great as the wealth of this world could make him. *Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God,* as happy, in appearance, as Adam in the delicious mansions prepared for him in the days of his innocence. *Every precious stone adorned him, studded his crown, and glittered on his royal robes.* The most curious and exquisite instruments of music were prepared to celebrate his birth or coronation day. *Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth;* alluding perhaps to the golden cherubim that covered the mercy-seat, or to the cherubim which guarded the tree of life in Eden, or rather to the angelic host (see the Notes): so beautiful he seemed, and so mighty to protect his people from every foe. *And I have set thee so:* to God he owed his advancement, and all the greatness that he possessed. *Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God, thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire,* adorned with jewels, as God's high-priest when he put on the precious breastplate. Which some interpret of antichrist, assuming infallible wisdom, seated on high in the church of God, dressed in most costly apparel, pretending the authority of Christ to be the head and protector of the church, the mount of God, and usurping authority over the people of God, *the stones of fire,* who shine bright in all holy conversation.

2. His iniquity brought him to destruction. *Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created,* prospered and wast successful, till iniquity was found in thee. [1.] There was iniquity in traffic. In the multitude of merchandise much fraud and violence were practised. For very hard it is to be engaged in a multiplicity of business with clean hands: the mystery of trade is too frequently a mystery of iniquity. [2.] He was proud and vain-glorious. *Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty;* and, gazing on his own excellencies, his wisdom became foolishness: for those who are proud of their attainments, corrupt and spoil what otherwise would be praiseworthy. [3.] *Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries* by idolatrous worship, or the lewd

actions commonly practised there. For which multitude of iniquities God threatens to destroy him, utterly to cast him down from his high estate, and cut him off from all his possessions as profane, having abused his station, he justly forfeits it: in the dust the kings shall behold him lie, and take warning by his fall, or exult over him. A fire of divine wrath shall be kindled, consume his city to ashes, and himself in the midst of it; and the beholders, with terror and astonishment, shall wonder at his fearful fall, from which he shall never recover. All which is most applicable to the man of sin, whose coffers are filled with the gainful trade of priestcraft, pardons and indulgences; proud of his dignity, corrupt in his worship, defiling the sanctuary with image-worship and superstition: for which his day of ruin will come, when all his glory will be tarnished, when he shall be cast down with divine judgments, and at last doomed to the lake which burneth with fire for ever and ever. *Note;* Let all the workers of iniquity tremble: the same sin will assuredly produce the same destruction.

3dly, Two ways God will glorify himself,

1. In the destruction of Zidon. God is her enemy, will execute his judgments upon her, and be sanctified, make his holiness and justice appear in her ruin. The depopulating scourge of pestilence shall be sent upon her, and the wounded shall fall on every side. Thus will God make himself known in the vengeance that he executes.

2. In the restoration and prosperity of his Israel. God will bring them again to their own land, and cause them to dwell safely: the nations around, who despised and vexed them, as briars and thorns, shall be no more; and he will be sanctified in the sight of the heathen, who will be made to own his hand evidently displayed in behalf of his people: and with comfort they shall know him to be the Lord, experiencing his mercy and proving his faithfulness. And this restoration seems to look farther than their return from Babylon, after which they were still frequently beset with enemies; and to have respect to their last recovery, when they shall be admitted into the church; and all the faithful among them shall enter into that eternal rest, where the wicked will cease from troubling, and every tear be for ever wiped from their eyes.

## CHAP. XXIX.

*Ver. 1. In the tenth year, &c.]* The tenth year is that from the taking of Jerusalem: according to Usher, about the

2 Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt:

3 Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.

4 But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales.

5 And I will leave thee *thrown* into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven.

6 And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I *am* the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.

7 When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and read all their shoulder:

and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.

8 ¶ Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee.

9 And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD: because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it.

10 Behold, therefore, I *am* against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia.

11 No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years.

12 And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries *that are* desolate, and her cities among the cities *that are* laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries.

the year of the world 3415. The prophecies in this and the three following chapters respect Egypt; though they were not all delivered at the same time. See on chap. xxxi. 3.

Ver. 3. *I am against thee, &c.*] This king of Egypt was Pharaoh Hophra, of whom Jeremiah speaks, chap. xli. 30. and who is called Apries by Herodotus; who informs us, agreeably to this description of our prophet, that Apries proudly and wickedly boasted of having established his kingdom so securely, that it was not in the power of God himself to dispossess him. Instead of, *the great dragon*, we should read, *the great crocodile*. The next verse alludes to the manner of taking the crocodile. See Job, xli. 1. It is commonly supposed, that Amasis is alluded to in ver. 4. who dethroned Apries. See Bishop Newton, vol. i. and chap. xxxii. 2. Among the ancients, the crocodile was a symbol of Egypt; and appears so on Roman coins. Michaelis. Milton has this sublime passage in view:

Thus with ten wounds

The river-dragon tam'd at length submits.

PAR. LOST, xii. 190.

See Addison's Spect. n. 369. D'Herbelot cites an eastern poet, who, celebrating the prowess of a most valiant Persian prince, said, he was dreadful as a lion in the field, and not less terrible in the water than a crocodile. Harmer, ii. 529. See chap. xxxii. 2. where both these comparisons are used.

Rivers.] The Nile has seven mouths. Rivers also emptied themselves into it, and channels were cut from it.

Ver. 5. *And I will leave thee thrown, &c.*] *And I will drag thee out, &c.*

Ver. 7. *When they took hold of thee, &c.*] *For when they took hold of thee, thou wast broken in their hand, and didst rend the hand of each of them. When they leaned upon thee thou brakest, and didst lose or put out of joint all their shoulders.* Houbigant. Instead of, *By thy hand*, some read, *With their hands*; and instead of, *All their loins to be at a stand*; — *All their loins shake*, or *to be pierced*.

Ver. 10. *From the tower of Syene*] *From Migdol to Syene.* Houbigant. Syene was the last city in Egypt, going towards Ethiopia.

Ver. 11. *Forty years*] After the total defeat of Apries by the Cyreneans, in which so many Egyptians fell that the whole nation was enraged against their king, a civil war with Amasis followed, a conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, and another conquest of it by Cyrus. We learn from this passage during what period of years Egypt was desolated, and in a manner deserted.

Ver. 12. *Her cities—shall be desolate, &c.*] We cannot prove indeed, from heathen authors, that this desolation of the country continued exactly *forty years*, though it is likely enough that this, as well as the other conquered countries, did not shake off the Babylonish yoke till the time of Cyrus; but we are assured by Berosus, that Nebuchadnezzar took several captives in Egypt, and carried them to Babylon; and from Megasthenes we learn, that he transplanted and settled others in Pontus. So true it is, that they *were scattered among the nations, and dispersed through the countries,* and



13 Yet thus saith the Lord GOD; At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered:

14 And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return *into* the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom.

15 It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.

16 And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth *their* iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.

17 ¶ And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

18 Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head *was* made bald, and every shoulder *was* peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it:

19 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army.

and might, upon the dissolution of the Babylonish empire, return to their native country. Newton, p. 362.

*Ver. 14. Pathros.] Delta, or Thebais.*

*Ver. 15. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms.]* By *base kingdoms* is meant, that it should be tributary and subject to strangers, for the much greater part of the time. This is the purport and meaning of the prophecy; and the truth will appear by a short deduction of the history of Egypt from that time to this. It was first of all tributary to the Babylonians, under Amasis; upon the ruin of the Babylonish empire, it was subject to the Persians; upon the failure of the Persian empire, it came into the hands of the Macedonians; after the Macedonians, it fell under the dominion of the Romans; after the division of the Roman empire, it was subdued by the Saracens, in the reign of Omar, their third emperor; about the year of Christ 1250, it was in the possession of the *Mamelucs*, a word which signifies "a slave bought with money," but is appropriated to those Turkish or Circassian slaves, whom the sultans of Egypt bought young, and taught military exercises. These slaves usurped the royal authority, and by that means Egypt became their prey. But in the year of Christ 1517, Selim, the ninth emperor of the Turks, conquered the Mamelucs, and annexed Egypt to the Ottoman empire, of which it has continued to be a province to this day; except during the very short interval when it was lately in the hands of the French. It has been governed under the Turkish emperor by a Turkish basha, with 24 *beys* or princes under him, who were advanced from servitude to the administration of public affairs; a superstitious notion possessing the Egyptians, that it is decreed by fate that captives shall reign, and the natives be subject to them; a notion which, in all probability, was at first derived from some mistaken tradition of these prophecies, that *Egypt* should be a *base kingdom*; that there should be no more a prince of the land of *Egypt*; and that *Ham*, in his posterity, should be a *servant of servants unto his brethren*. By this deduction it appears, that the truth of Ezekiel's prediction is fulfilled by the whole series of the history of Egypt, from that time to the present. And who could pretend to say, upon human

conjecture, that so great a kingdom, so rich and fertile a country, should ever afterwards become tributary and subject to strangers. It is now much more than 2000 years since this prophecy was first delivered; and what likelihood or appearance was there, that the Egyptians should, for so many ages, bow under a foreign yoke, and never in all that time be able to recover their liberties, and have a prince of their own to reign over them? See Bishop Newton.

*Ver. 16. Which bringeth, &c.] Prompting them to mischief when they look after them, &c.*

*Ver. 18, 19. Son of man, &c.]* Menander the Greek historian, Philostratus, and Josephus, all assert, that Nebuchadrezzar besieged Tyre thirteen years, when Ithobal was king there. The siege continuing so long, the soldiers must needs endure many hardships. Their heads were made bald by continually wearing helmets, and their skin was worn off their shoulders with carrying earth in baskets to raise fortifications; whence we understand better the force of Ezekiel's expression, that *Nebuchadrezzar caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled*. It farther appears from the Phœnician annals, that the Tyrians received their kings afterwards from Babylon; which plainly evinces, that some of the blood royal must have been carried captives thither. The Phœnician annals too agree with Ezekiel's account of the year wherein the city was taken; Tyre therefore, according to the prophecies, was subdued and taken by Nebuchadrezzar and the Chaldeans; and after this we hear little more of that part of the city which stood upon the continent. It is some satisfaction, that we are able to produce such authorities out of heathen historians for transactions of so remote antiquity. The Scripture asserts, that *Nebuchadrezzar and his army had no wages for Tyrus, for the service which he had served against it*; and this was literally true; for when the Tyrians saw no hope of escaping the besiegers, they went on board ships, and fled to Carthage, carrying all their furniture, clothes, and wealth with them. So that when the city was taken, the conqueror found nothing worthy of his labour. It must

20 I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God.

21 ¶ In that day will I cause the horn of

the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

have been grievous to Nebuchadrezzar, after so long a siege, to have been disappointed of the spoil of so rich a city; and therefore Ezekiel was commissioned to promise him the conquest of Egypt for his reward; ver. 19. See Bishop Newton, vol. i. and Calmet.

Ver. 21. *In that day will I cause the horn, &c.*] That is to say, after the destruction of God's and his church's enemies, the kingdom and state of the Jews shall flourish again, particularly under the Messiah, as is more clearly foretold, chap. xxxiv. 23, &c. xxxvii. 21, &c. See also chap. xxiv. 27.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The date of this prophecy is observable. It was just at the time when the Egyptian army was advancing to raise the siege of Jerusalem, and when the Jews confidently expected relief from their approach. The vain hopes that sinners entertain are often most sanguine, when their ruin is nearest.

The prophecy is directed against Egypt and her king, represented by a great dragon, or crocodile, lying in the river Nile. We have here,

1. His pride. *He lieth in the midst of his rivers, secure, at ease, and rolling in wealth and pleasures; and hath said, My river is mine own, I have made it for myself;* as if he reigned independent of God, and owed to himself alone the monarchy that he possessed. Thus pride calls God's gifts our own, and, self-idolaters, we leave him far above out of our sight.

2. The judgment executed on Pharaoh. *I am against thee, or above thee,* able and determined to punish his arrogance. God will put hooks in his jaws, and with all the fish which stick to his scales, his numerous forces, will drag him out of his rivers, and in the wilderness give him, with all his army, for a prey to the beasts of the field, and to the fowls of the heaven. *Note;* Pride is the prelude to destruction; and they who are most secure are usually most exposed.

3. The provocation which most hastened the ruin of Egypt was her falsehood and deceitfulness with regard to the Jewish people. Encouraged by the alliance with Pharaoh, Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon, and now, when he looked for support from Egypt, the staff on which he leaned broke under him, to his vast disappointment and utter consternation, *rent his shoulder,* brought on him the Chaldean sword, and made all his bins at a stand, compelled to stand alone, and in the greatest amazement, conscious of his own inability to cope with Nebuchadrezzar's army. It was folly indeed in Zedekiah to rely on such auxiliaries; but their perfidy in deceiving him was not the less criminal, and God will revenge such treachery.

2dly, We have,

1. The terrible overthrow of Egypt foretold. God will make them know by his judgments that he is the Lord, and prove the vanity of their insolent vaunts. The sword

of the Chaldeans shall pass through the land, lay all waste before it, cut off man and beast from one end of Egypt to the other, and leave it depopulated, without trade, unfrequented and like a desert during forty years: the inhabitants in general being slain, or carried into captivity, Egypt was given to Nebuchadrezzar; and if we allow three years for completing the conquest, the forty years will end with the destruction of the Babylonian monarchy by Cyrus, when probably Egypt, as well as the other nations, recovered in some measure her liberty.

2. The restoration of Egypt, when the forty years were expired; not to her former grandeur and magnificence; but, though a kingdom, and flourishing under some of her monarchs, particularly the Ptolemies, yet by repeated conquests at last reduced to its present base and low estate under the Turks, no more the mistress of nations, nor the stay of Israel, *to bring their iniquity to remembrance,* by their placing dependance upon Egypt, and withdrawing their confidence from God. *Note;* (1.) God still in wrath remembers mercy. (2.) It is gracious as just in the Lord to remove those creature comforts and confidences which estranged our hearts from him.

3dly, We have another of Ezekiel's prophecies in this chapter; but all the prophecies concerning Egypt are laid together.

1. In consideration of the hard service that Nebuchadrezzar underwent before Tyre, the spoil of which so little repaid him for his pains, great part of their effects being removed, as history informs us, before the place was taken, Egypt is given him and his army for their wages; being before weakened by intestine divisions, it fell an easy prey to the conqueror. As the vengeance executed on Tyre was by divine command, God will not suffer Nebuchadrezzar to work without a reward. *Note;* (1.) Even wicked men, when employed in God's service, find their account in it; they are paid in the good things of this life. (2.) Many who propose no other end than their own advantage, and perhaps the gratification of their ambition and covetousness, are made by the secret over-ruling providence of God subservient to his designs.

2. A gracious promise is made to Israel. *In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud;* either at the day of Egypt's destruction, about which time Daniel and his fellows, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, were so distinguished of God, and honoured by the king of Babylon, (see Dan. i. 3, &c. ii. 49.) or shortly after, when Jehoiachim was enlarged from prison and honourably treated, Jer. liii. 31, 32. or the time here spoken of may refer to the forty years, when the captivity of Israel as well as Egypt should end; and under Zerubbabel and others the nation should revive from its desolations; but, above all, the prophecy refers to the times of the Messiah. *And I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them,* when the fulfilment of the prophecies would give peculiar force

## C H A P. XXX.

*The desolation of Egypt, and her helpers. The arm of Babylon shall be strengthened to break the arm of Egypt.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**T**HE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Howl ye, Woe worth the day!

3 For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen.

4 And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down.

5 Ethiopia, and Lybia, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and Chub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword.

6 Thus saith the LORD; They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord GOD.

7 And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted.

8 And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and when all her helpers shall be destroyed.

9 In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt: for, lo, it cometh.

10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon.

11 He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations, shall be brought to destroy the land: and they shall draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain.

12 And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked: and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I the LORD have spoken it.

13 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease out of Noph; and there shall be no

force to his exhortations, and embolden him in the work of the Lord. For, though no more of his prophecies are recorded, (these concerning Egypt being the last in order of time,) no doubt he continued a faithful preacher to the people, which could not but prove a singular blessing to them. For when God enlarges the hearts of his faithful servants, and enables them with boldness to speak, it is a gracious symptom that they shall see of the travail of their souls in the salvation of many to whom they minister.

## C H A P. XXX.

*Ver. 3. The day is near*] The day of the Lord implies a day of sacrifice and vengeance upon his enemies. The destruction of Babylon, described in such awful terms, as if all nature suffered by the shock, is represented as *the day of the Lord*, Isai. xiii. 6. So is the destruction of Bozrah and Idumæa, Isai. xxxiv. 8. See also Jer. xlv. 10. Joel, iii. 14. Zeph. ii. 2, 3. When the figurative *day* is used in general to express the period of any one's existence, then it denotes time; but when it is used to express any particular thing or employ, then it signifies some characteristic circumstance. Thus that signal catastrophe in the fortunes of the Jews, both spiritual and temporal, is called *their day*, Hof. i. 11. See Div. Leg. vol. iv. Sharp on the Rise and Fall of Jerusalem; and Calmet.

*Ver. 4. Her multitude*] *Her wealth.* [Houbigant; and so *ver. 10.*

*Ver. 5. Lybia and Lydia*] Or, *Mauritania and Abyssinia.* All the mingled people, mean their mercenaries and auxiliaries; *Chub* means the *Chubians*, placed by Ptolemy in the Mareotis. "I do not know (says Calmet) whether the name of Egypt may not be derived from *Cub*, or *Cubti*, or *Gubti*;—*Egubti*." The men of the land that is in league, mean the neighbouring people, who were confederate with the Egyptians against the king of Babylon.

*Ver. 6. From the tower of Syene*] Or, *from Migdol to Syene.*

*Ver. 9. In that day shall messengers go forth, &c.*] *In that day shall swift messengers go forth from me, who shall terrify the secure Ethiopian; and he shall have great fears concerning the day of Egypt, because it shall be nigh.* Houbigant; who observes, that as the messengers are sent to Cush or Ethiopia, if the Arabians be meant, they were not to be gone to by ships: if the Ethiopians, properly so called, to the south of Egypt, it was not proper for messengers to be sent to them in ships, because the navigation was against the stream, and could not be so quick as it ought upon an approaching calamity.

*Ver. 12. I will make the rivers dry, &c.*] "I will destroy the strength of Egypt." The metaphor is taken from the decrease or falling of the Nile, upon the overflowings of which all the plenty and prosperity of Egypt depended. See 2 Kings, xix. 24. and Isai. xxxvii. 25.

*Ver. 13. Noph*] Or, *Memphis*; and so *ver. 16. There shall*

more a prince of the land of Egypt; and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt.

14 And I will make Pathros desolate, and will set fire in Zoan, and will execute judgments in No.

15 And I will pour my fury upon Sin, the strength of Egypt; and I will cut off the multitude of No.

16 And I will set fire in Egypt: Sin shall have great pain, and No shall be rent asunder, and Noph shall have distresses daily.

17 The young men of Aven and of Phi-beseth shall fall by the sword: and these cities shall go into captivity.

18 At Tehaphnehes also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity.

19 Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

20 ¶ And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

21 Son of man, I have broken the arm of

Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword.

22 Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt; and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand.

23 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries.

24 And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man.

25 But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt.

26 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

*shall be no more a prince, &c.* seems to mean that there shall be no more a natural prince of the Egyptian race, but it shall be subject to foreigners. It is probable, that these prophecies respect the time of Cambyfes and Darius Ochus. See the note on chap. xxix. 15. and Usher's Annals, A. M. 3478 and 3653.

Ver. 14. Pathros—Zoan] Delta, or Thebais—Tanis.

No] Diopolis, or Thebes. Boch.

Ver. 15. Sin—the multitude of No] Pelusium, a strong city on the frontiers of Egypt. Bochart and Michaelis. See Nahum, iii. 8.

Ver. 17. Aven—Phi-beseth.] Heliopolis—Bubastum.

Ver. 18. Tehaphnehes—yokes] Daphne—sceptres.

Ver. 21. To put a roller to bind it] It shall be bound with a roller, to heal it, and that it may be strengthened to hold the sword. Houbigant.

Ver. 22. The strong, and that which was broken] The strong arm as well as the wounded. Houbigant. "I will break Pharaoh, by the revolt of his subjects, by the war which Amasis shall bring upon him; and afterwards by that of Nebuchadrezzar; and all this in the space of fourteen or fifteen years." See Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Fearful is the overthrow of the Egyptians here recorded.

1. They are called to howl, and lament the dreadful day, big with wrath, and swift approaching; a day of

darkness and gloominess, when every face should gather blackness. *It shall be the time of the heathen;* either the time to visit the heathen nations of Egypt and Ethiopia, or the time of the Chaldean power. Note; The sinner's day, though long delayed, shall come at last; and then, too late, he will pour forth his remediless sorrows.

2. The threatened destruction shall utterly ruin both Egypt and her confederates. The sword of the victorious king of Babylon shall fill the land, from one end to the other, with the carcases of the slain; the cities shall be destroyed, the images broken, the country made desolate, terrors spread on every side, the beauty, strength, and multitude of Egypt utterly wasted, and the dark cloud of abject wretchedness spread over them. Thus shall a fierce and terrible enemy, from a strange and distant land, wicked men, whom no laws of humanity or justice restrain, be let loose upon them, and ravage without mercy. The pride of Egypt, her royal family, shall be extinct, and no hopes remain from the rising generation, *the young men being slain with the sword, and the daughters gone into captivity.* Nor shall her auxiliaries be able to give her the least support; they shall fall with her, Ethiopia, Lybia, Lydia, Chub, and all the mingled people of various nations, who are in league with Egypt, shall perish. And, while many out of these countries, who sojourned among the Egyptians, or were auxiliaries in their army, fell with them, the tidings of their destruction shall fly swift to the careless Ethiopians, and

terrify

C H A P. XXXI.

*A relation unto Pharaoh of the glory of Assyria, and the fall thereof for pride. The like destruction of Egypt.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**A**ND it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness?

3 Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs.

4 The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field.

5 Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long be-

cause of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth.

6 All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.

7 Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters.

8 The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir-trees were not like his boughs, and the chesnut-trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty.

9 I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.

10 Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height;

terrify them with the apprehensions of sharing Egypt's fate. Nor are their apprehensions groundless; for, *Lo! it cometh.* Note; (1.) Confederates in iniquity will perish together. (2.) When we see our neighbour's house on fire, it is time to tremble for our own: one sinner's fall should alarm the survivors.

3. God's hand is visible in the judgment. Whatever instrument he employs, the work is his own. His veracity is engaged for the fulfilment of the threatening; and, in the judgments that he will execute, his power and faithfulness will appear, and they shall know that he is the Lord. Note; (1.) Whatever judgments are in the earth, God's hand is to be seen and acknowledged in them. (2.) One jot or tittle of God's word shall never fail.

adly, The army of the Egyptians, which had attempted to raise the siege of Jerusalem, had been now forced to retire with shame to their own land, and, without making any farther efforts, left Jerusalem to her fate; but their own ruin quickly followed. It is foretold,

1. That Egypt shall be weakened by degrees, and brought to destruction. One arm of Pharaoh was already broken in the defeat received at Carchemish, Jer. xlv. 2. and the conquest of a part of the Egyptian dominions, 2 Kings, xxiv. 7. and from this fatal stroke he never recovered; a second blow would complete his ruin. His strong arm, like that which was broken, God will break by the sword of Nebuchadrezzar: so that, unable to wield a sword, groaning as a soldier desperately wounded, he must fall. His kingdom shall be vanquished, his people dispersed and led into captivity. And in these sufferings, which God inflicts, he will make them know that he is the Lord.

VOL. IV.

2. The king of Babylon shall grow stronger and stronger. God will put a sword into his hands, give him might to wield it, and subdue Egypt before him. All power is given from above: the strength of the mightiest is derived alone from the Almighty God.

C H A P. XXXI.

Ver. 3. *Behold, the Assyrian, &c.*] This parable, says Bishop Lowth, owes much to Meibomius, who translates אשור *Ashur*, tall, straight, an epithet of the cedar; and not Assyrian, which can have no meaning at all in this passage. The word אשור *Ashur*, is here joined with cedar, as a definitive attribute to denote the highest and most beautiful kind of cedar. See his 9th Prelection. The manner in which the prophet has embellished his description, is full of propriety and elegance; and the colouring is such as fills the mind with the greatest pleasure. The LXX read the latter clause of this verse, *His top was among the clouds.* The whole is an allegorical description of the greatness and splendour of the Egyptian empire.

Ver. 4. *Little rivers.*] An allusion to the small artificial channels through which water was usually distributed in eastern gardens. See Bishop Lowth on Isai. i. 30.

Ver. 8. *The cedars in the garden of God.*] Some render this, *The cedars in the garden of God were not higher than he.* The expression seems only to mean *the highest trees.* Instead of, *I have made him fair,* ver. 9. we may read, *I had, &c.*

Ver. 10. *Because, &c.*] *Because he had been proud on account of his greatness.* Houbigant.

T t

Ver.

11 I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him; I have driven him out for his wickedness.

12 And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him.

13 Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches:

14 To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit.

15 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a

mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him.

16 I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth.

17 They also went down into hell with him unto *them that be slain with the sword*; and *they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen.*

18 ¶ To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with *them that be slain by the sword.* This is Pharaoh, and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

*Ver. 11. Into the hand of the mighty one*] That is, into the hands of the Chaldeans.

*Ver. 12. Have cut him off*] Cut him down. Virgil has a like comparison with respect to the fall of Troy:

*Ac veluti summis antiquam in montibus ornum  
Quum ferro accisam crebrisque bipennibus instant  
Eruere agricola certatim; illa usque minatur,  
Et tremefacta comam concusso vertice nutat:  
Vulneribus donec paulatim evicta, supremum  
Congemuit, traxitque jugis avulsa ruinam.*

*ÆN. ii. 626.*

So when an aged ash, whose honours rise  
From some steep mountain tow'ring to the skies,  
With many an axe by shouting swains is ply'd,  
Fierce they repeat the strokes from ev'ry side;  
The tall tree trembling as the blows go round,  
Bows the high head, and nods to ev'ry wound:  
At last quite vanquish'd with a dreadful peal,  
In one loud groan rolls crashing down the vale,  
Headlong with half the shatter'd mountain flies,  
And stretch'd out huge in length th' unmeasur'd ruin lies.

PITT.

*Ver. 13. Upon his ruin, &c.*] "As birds sit upon the boughs of a tree cut down, and the beasts brouze upon his branches; so shall the dominions of Pharaoh be a prey to the conquerors." It is a common image among the poetical writers, in representing a great national calamity or destruction, to mention animals of prey as fattening on the bodies of the dead. See Hom. II. i. and Deut. xxxii. 24. Psal. lxxviii. 48. Isai. xxxiv. 7. But our author has advanced farther than any of his predecessors,

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and by a bold figure gives the trees, which he uses as a symbol for kingdoms, as a prey to the birds; and likewise places their ghosts in the separate mansions of the dead. We cannot sufficiently admire the beautiful novelty of this figure, the art wherewith it is wrought up, and the fertility of the prophet's invention. See Isai. xiv. 9—20. and Michaelis's notes.

*Ver. 14. To the end that none of all the trees*] "Thy destruction shall be a warning to other kings and potentates, to deter them from insolence in the time of their prosperity." Instead of, *Neither their trees stand up, &c.* Houbigant reads, *Neither any of these which drink the waters apply themselves to it; namely, this lofty tree, while it is high; after they are all thrust down to death, to the lower parts of the earth, to the multitude of the children of men, who are gone down to the pit.*

*Ver. 15. I caused a mourning*] I caused the deep to mourn for him; I restrained his rivers; and the many waters were withheld. Houbigant. Hereby is meant figuratively the confederates and allies of Pharaoh.

*Ver. 16. With them that descend, &c.*] To those who have descended, &c. At the same time all the trees, &c. Houbigant. That is to say, all the deceased princes, confederates with Pharaoh.

*Ver. 17. They also went down into hell, &c.*] For these also descended with him into hell, to those who had perished by the sword; and whoever among the heathen dwelt under his shadow have perished. Houbigant.

*Ver. 18. This is Pharaoh, &c.*] This clause evidently proves

C H A P. XXXII.

*A lamentation for the fearful fall of Egypt. The sword of Babylon shall destroy it. It shall be brought down to hell among all the uncircumcised nations.*

[Before Christ 587.]

**A**ND it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day

proves the truth of the observation made on the third verse, that this allegory of the cedar refers not to the Assyrian, but to the destruction of Pharaoh king of Egypt, his princes, confederates, and people.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This prophecy bears date about five weeks before Jerusalem was taken; when judgment, which had begun at the house of God, did not end there; but Egypt must also drink of the cup of trembling.

Pharaoh is bid to consult the records of time, and select the mightiest monarch that had gone before him, with whom to compare himself, even the Assyrian\*; who, notwithstanding all his ancient greatness, was now fallen. Nimrod had founded that monarchy, and the Babylonian empire had risen on its ruins. A warning to the greatest not to be high-minded, but fear.

The Assyrian monarch is compared to a tall and spreading cedar. His dignity most exalted, his dominions vastly extensive, and admirably governed, like the regular branches of a lofty tree. No prince or potentate could vie with him of all the surrounding nations, and they secretly envied his greatness, the tribute which merit and prosperity usually must pay. Protected by his power, and safe under his government, multitudes from all nations chose to settle in his dominions. Planted by the Divine Providence, and watered with the abundance of temporal good things, he seemed sufficiently strong to resist every stormy blast; and sent out little rivers unto all the trees of the field; all his subjects received abundant advantages from him. Note; They are truly great who employ their power and influence to promote the good of mankind.

2dly, The Assyrian monarch, whom Pharaoh resembled in greatness, he must resemble in his ruin.

1. They were both puffed up on their prosperity. *Thou hast lifted up thyself in height*; thou, O king of Egypt; or *thou, O king of Assyria*; for to either the words may be applied; and they are true of both, pride being the common snare which attends advancement; and few carry with them, into a superior sphere, the humble spirit of their former station.

2. They fall alike, as the just punishment of their pride and wickedness:

[1.] The Assyrian by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty one of the heathen; who in the beginning of his reign, in conjunction with Cyaxares king of the Medes, is said to have destroyed that monarchy, with Nineveh the capital, and transferred the seat of empire to Babylon. God had determined his ruin, and therefore it must infallibly come to pass. Already this mighty cedar is broken: the

\* In my Reflections I generally take the sense of the Scriptures according to our own version.

of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou *art* as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst

terrible army of Chaldeans and Medes have lopped all his branches, and left them withering on every mountain and valley, and by every river: the provinces of the empire dismembered, the cities and country subdued; so that, as birds from a fallen tree, the several nations, who sought for shelter under the shadow of the Assyrian monarch, are fled, have deserted him in the day of his calamity. His enemies, like birds and beasts of prey, feed upon him; or, literally, the fowls of heaven fall upon the carcases of the slain; or those who envied his greatness, rejoice at his fall. And herein God designed to warn proud monarchs of their danger, not to trust on their power or wealth, as if these could be their protection; but to remember that they are mortal worms, and in an instant, when God strikes, numbered with the dead. This the Assyrian monarch proved, and at his ruin an universal groan was given from all who were in league with him, as the forest echoes with the falling cedar; a general stagnation of trade and commerce for a while prevailed; and, trembling for themselves, his allies fainted, conscious of their own inability to resist the conqueror of their mightier Assyrian friend; while *the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon*, either the kingdoms subdued and ravaged by the Assyrian monarch in times past, or the nations in alliance with him, who shared his fearful destruction, shall in their graves be comforted to see him brought as low as themselves. Note; (1.) Wickedness is the cause of all our wretchedness. (2.) Pride will have a fall. (3.) They who are courted in prosperity, will often be deserted in the day of calamity. (4.) The fall of great men usually involves multitudes in their ruin. (5.) God intends that his providential strokes on others should be warnings to ourselves.

[2.] The Egyptian monarch may expect the same fate. Let him choose the mightiest kingdoms with which to compare himself, nay, were he even as great as the king of Assyria, it would not secure him from ruin: he should be brought to the same wretched state; lie down among the dead, yea, among *the uncircumcised*, under the eternal wrath of God. *This is Pharaoh and all his multitude*: such will be the end of all his greatness, grandeur, and numerous subjects. And thus *shall the wicked be turned into hell, with all the nations*, however many or mighty, *that forget God*.

C H A P. XXXII.

TO the preceding funeral panegyric over Assyria, the fate of which was past, Ezekiel prophetically subjoins a similar panegyric over Egypt, though its fate was still future; making plainly here a happy variation only in the oratorical figure of *πρὸ ὀμμάτων ποιεῖν*. For by that figurèd past events are brought down, and represented as now present before our eyes; whereas on the contrary by this



the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers.

3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will therefore spread out my net over thee with a company of many people; and they shall bring thee up in my net.

4 Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee.

5 And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height.

6 I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, *even* to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee.

7 And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.

8 All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD.

9 I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known.

10 Yea, I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall tremble at every moment; every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall.

11 ¶ For thus saith the Lord GOD; The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee.

12 By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, the terrible of the nations, all of them: and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed.

13 I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters; neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them.

14 Then will I make their waters deep, and

prophetic figure future events are anticipated, and represented as already-past.

*Ver. 2. Take up a lamentation*] As the style of the lamentations was always figurative and poetical, Ezekiel describes the king of Egypt as a great *dragon* or *crocodile*,—for so the word תַּנִּים *tannim*, should be rendered, and not *whale*,—troubling the waters with his feet, and fouling the rivers; or disturbing all the nations round about him: and in the name of the Lord he threatens to take him *in his net*, and *cast him forth into the open field*, as a prey to the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the whole earth; ver. 3, 4. So that he should no more trouble the waters with his feet, but the rivers should run [smooth] as oil: ver. 14. And in the following part of the chapter, having sent Pharaoh and his multitude to the land of the *Inferi*; ver. 18. he represents the inhabitants of these lower regions, as addressing the king of Egypt in the same manner, as Isaiah in his 14th chapter describes them welcoming the king of Babylon. Ver. 21. *The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of Sheol*, &c. The Hebrew for what we render, *The strong among the mighty*, is גִּבּוֹרִים אֱלֹהֵי eilei gibborim, *The gods of the mighty*; meaning, no doubt, their hero gods, whose souls, though the superstition of that people had placed them among the stars, the prophet, on the contrary, intimates to them were to be found in *Sheol*; thus ridiculing the worship of their men deities, of which Egypt was the great promoter, if not the inventor. But the most remarkable thing in his threatening of Pharaoh is, the prophet's telling him more than once, that he *should lie down with the uncircumcised*; ver. 19—28. It is well known, that circumcision was in use and honour among the Egyptians; whatever reasons

they might have for it, or what advantages soever they hoped from it. But the circumcision of this heathen prince, the prophet plainly tells him, should be of no avail to him after death. For an idolater and unbeliever, without doubt, though circumcised, must be in the same state there with other unbelievers. *He should be laid with the uncircumcised*, and find the same bad reception in the other world. But does not this of the prophet plainly speak a difference between the death and consequences of it to the uncircumcised, or unbelievers, and that of the circumcised believers, or God's people, and consequently tend to confirm the truth of that notion, that God's covenant with Abraham, of which circumcision was the seal, implied in it the promise of a future resurrection?—And if so, it is unreasonable surely to suppose, with some learned writers, that the body of the people, who were all without exception by an express law commanded to be circumcised, (see Gen. xvii. 14.) should be unacquainted with the very design and nature of that solemn rite by which they were admitted into covenant with God. See Peters on Job, p. 376.

*Ver. 5. With thy height*] Or, *With thy bulk*. Houbigant renders it, *With thy stench*.

*Ver. 6. I will also water with thy blood, &c.*] *I will water the land with thy blood; thy gore shall cover the mountains, and torrents shall abound from thee*. Houbigant.

*Ver. 7, 8. I will cover the heaven, &c.*] See Isai. xxiv. 23. xxx. 26. where the same metaphors are used, to denote the downfall of states and governments.

*Ver. 9. I will also vex, &c.*] *I will also cause the hearts of many people to quake concerning thee, when I shall bring thy captives among the nations, &c.* Houbigant.

*Ver.*

cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord GOD.

15 When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I *am* the LORD.

16 This *is* the lamentation wherewith they shall lament her: the daughters of the nations shall lament her: they shall lament for her, *even* for Egypt, and for all her multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

17 ¶ It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

18 Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, *even* her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit.

19 Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised.

20 They shall fall in the midst of *them that are* slain by the sword: she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes.

21 The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword.

22 Ashtur *is* there and all her company: his graves *are* about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword:

23 Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave: all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living.

24 There *is* Elam and all her multitude round about her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living; yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit.

25 They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitude: her graves *are* round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword; though their terror was caused in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of *them that be* slain.

26 There *is* Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves *are* round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living.

27 And they shall not lie with the mighty *that are* fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads; but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though *they were* the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

28 Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst

Ver. 13. *Neither shall the foot of man, &c.*] "The men and beasts in Egypt being intirely destroyed, it shall be like the waters of a river, which are never disturbed, but run pure and clear." See Lowth.

Ver. 14. *Then will I make, &c.*] *Then will I make their waters to rest, or subside, and cause their rivers to glide smoothly like oil, &c.*

Ver. 17. *In the fifteenth day of the month*] *In the fifth month, the tenth day of the month.* Houbigant.

Ver. 18. *Son of man, wail, &c.*] Bishop Lowth observes, that this prophetic ode is a master-piece in that species of writing which is appropriated to the exciting of terror. Houbigant reads the second clause, *And thrust them down, with the daughters of the nations; thrust them down to the lower parts of the earth, to those who are gone down to the lake.* And he observes, that the prophet is commanded to thrust the Egyptians down to the shades below, that is, to exhibit by an hypotoposis familiar with the prophets, the ruin of the Egyptians, similar to the ruin of the people who have

been destroyed and gone down to the regions of the dead. See the note on ver. 2.

Ver. 20. *They shall fall, &c.*] Houbigant connects this with the preceding verse, thus, [*Be thou laid*] among *these who have fallen by the sword: the sword hath rushed in, and taken her away, and all her multitudes.*

Ver. 21. *With them that help him*] *With them that have helped him, who are gone down, who lie in the midst, victims of the sword.* Houbigant. But this difficult verse may be otherwise rendered: *The strongest of the mighty men shall speak unto him out of the midst of the pit: they are gone down, they lie, together with them that helped him, uncircumcised, slain by the sword.*

Ver. 24. *There is Elam, &c.*] The reader will observe, that the ideas in this description are taken from the manner in which the bodies were deposited in the Eastern sepulchres, concerning which we have spoken before. See Isai. chap. xiv.

Ver. 27. *Gone down to hell*] *To Sheöl, or the place of the dead.*

of the uncircumcised, and shalt lie with *them that are slain with the sword.*

29 There *is* Edom, her kings, and all her princes, which with their might are laid by *them that were* slain by the sword: they shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit.

30 There *be* the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain; with their terror they are ashamed of their might; and they lie uncircumcised with *them that be* slain by the

sword, and bear their shame with them that go down to the pit.

31 Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, *even* Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord GOD.

32 For I have caused my terror in the land of the living: and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised with *them that are* slain with the sword, *even* Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

*Ver. 31. Pharaoh shall see them] Shall be seen among them, and shall be comforted for the loss of his army and kingdom; considering that so many and such great princes and nations have met with the same fate as himself. It appears from this, that Ezekiel supposed among the Egyptians a belief of the existence of souls when separated from their bodies. See Calmet.*

*Ver. 32. For I have caused my terror] For I will cast my terror upon the land of the living, that he may lie down in the midst, &c. Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though Egypt was an idolatrous nation, and Pharaoh a wicked prince, the prophet must take up a lamentation over them. For the ministers of God, when they can do no more, must weep over those who, hardened in sin, refuse to shed a tear for themselves.

1. The king of Egypt is compared to a lion, fierce, devouring, ravenous; to a whale, or crocodile *with his rivers*, a multitude of people, or *from his rivers*, fallying forth in quest of prey; and as this animal with his feet troubles the waters, so did he with his armies disturb the tranquillity of his neighbours. *Note;* Ambitious princes are the troublers of the earth, and the scourges of mankind.

2. His destruction is foretold. The same similitude is continued; God, the author of his punishment, shall take him as a great fish in his net, with all his numerous forces, and drag him to land; where, as a fish out of his element, he must perish, and, being cast forth into the open field, become a prey for every fowl and every beast. Yea, so immense will be the carnage, such a torrent of blood be shed, that the valleys shall be filled with the corpses of the slain, and the rivers swelled with human gore, hyperbolically speaking, as high as the mountains. The sword is God's, the executioners of vengeance the Chaldeans, *mighty men, the terrible nations*, who shall *spoil the pomp*, plunder the wealth, and slay the multitude of the Egyptians. Yea, the very cattle shall be destroyed, and the foot of man or beast shall no more disturb the waters, so few should remain. The land throughout shall be desolate, and all its plenty be at an end. Even the luminaries of heaven, as if shocked to behold these ravages, shall be darkened, and clothed in sackcloth; and the once rapid rivers, as if congealed with grief, shall with difficulty roll slowly on their heavy flood.

3. The tidings of Pharaoh's fall, with his multitudes, will alarm, amaze, and bitterly affect the nations. Not only the neighbours and allies would be vexed at their overthrow, lament them, and tremble at the judgments which they beheld; but even the remotest countries, who had no connection with the Egyptians, shall hear with astonishment the report, and dread every moment, lest that sword of the Lord, brandished before them by the king of Babylon, should fall at last upon their heads. *Note;* (1.) When the sword of judgment is brandished before us, and we see others smitten, it is high time to tremble for ourselves. (2.) Instead of being humbled by the visitations of God before them, hardened sinners murmur and fret against God.

4. The Lord will make himself awfully known by these strokes of vengeance: the folly of pride and creature-confidence will then appear, and God be found the only true abiding support, and satisfying portion.

2dly, About a fortnight after the former prophecy, according to our version, another was delivered. It brings Pharaoh, with his multitude, to their graves; and the prophet must lament over them, or rather compose a funeral dirge to be sung on this melancholy occasion.

1. Egypt is brought to the grave, and received among the dead. The prophet is ordered to *cast them down*, because divine power accompanied his prophetic word. Like other famous nations, she must lie low, nor be exempted from the common fate of those, whom in beauty she rivalled. She is delivered to the sword, and dragged, as the corpses of malefactors, in ignominy to the pit. The mighty among the dead, are poetically represented as rising to congratulate Pharaoh on his arrival, *Isai. xiv. 9.* and admit him free of their dreary mansions.

2. A variety of nations are mentioned who had gone down before him to the grave, and waited, in derision, to pay him mock honour, now become like one of them.

[1.] The Assyrian monarch with his subjects, a vast congregation, once the terror of the living, now slain by the sword, and their graves in rows placed round the sepulchre of their king. *Note;* They who have been a terror to others, must themselves fall before the king of terrors.

[2.] The Persians with their king next appear; they too had raised a mighty noise in the world, but are now *gone down uncircumcised, unholy and profane, into the nether parts*

## C H A P. XXXIII.

*According to the duty of a watchman, in warning the people, Ezekiel is admonished of his duty. God sheweth the justice of his ways towards the penitent, and towards revolvers; he maintaineth his justice. Upon the news of the taking of Jerusalem, Ezekiel prophesieth the desolation of the land. God's judgment upon the mockers of the prophets.*

[Before Christ 587.]

**A** GAIN the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman :

3 If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people ;

4 Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning ; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, and

took not warning ; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

6 But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned ; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

7 So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel ; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die ; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it ; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity ; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

10 ¶ Therefore, O thou son of man, speak

*parts of the earth, slain by the sword, and laid in an ignominious grave.*

[3.] Meshech and Tubal lie there, supposed to be the Scythian nations, not buried in state as the mighty, but with their swords under their heads, as warriors ; and their iniquities shall be upon their bones, dug out of their graves, and ignominiously exposed, though once the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

[4.] There lies Edom with her kings and princes ; their might unable to protect them, and forced to sloop to the devouring sword. Though the circumcised descendants of Abraham, yet, being unlike him in their spirit and temper, they fall among the uncircumcised. No outward privileges can protect those whose hearts are apostatized from God.

[5.] The princes of the north, with the Zidonians, notwithstanding their maritime forces, and strong fortifications, are fallen, and their pride confounded in the dust.

3dly, Pharaoh, with his multitude slain by the sword, shall make his grave with these, and share that consolation, if such a wretched reflection can be supposed to administer comfort, that he looks round and beholds other mighty monarchs as low and wretched as himself.

In all this description of Egypt's fall, perhaps something typical may be intended, respecting the ruin of the anti-christian foe, Rev. xi. 8. which may engage the prophet to dwell the longer upon it. And we may in general read and tremble, while we see sinners so many and mighty cast down into the pit of destruction ; and learn how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

## C H A P. XXXIII.

*Ver. 2. Son of man.]* The reader will find in the third chapter, from ver. 17 to 22. what is here repeated in the ten first verses of this chapter. Instead of, *Of their coasts*, Houbigant reads, *from among them*.

*Of their coasts.]* *Out of their borders :* The proper places to station watchmen.

When the prophet had confirmed his predictions of evil both to the Jews and Heathens by exemplifications of the like predictions already fulfilled among the latter ; he proceeds to apply home the conclusion arising hence, by an expostulation and pathetic address to the hearts and consciences of the Jews.—But to what Jews is this addressed ? To the Jews who were already in captivity. In order then that this address might make the stronger impression on them, and produce its wished-for effect, he immediately subjoins an information, which he here presents as having been just then received, of the actual capture and destruction of the city of Jerusalem, agreeably to his foregoing prophecies against it : the accomplishment of which prediction against the Jews themselves, joined to his historic narrations before of the accomplishment of many others against the Heathens, both complete his arguments in favour of the credit and veracity of his predictions against Egypt or other nations, and also prove by a conspicuous example the truth of that maxim with which he had concluded his late address to the captive Jews, "That God will judge every one after his ways, both Jews and Heathens."

*Ver. 5. But he that taketh warning.]* *But had he taken warning, he had delivered his soul.*

*Ver.*

unto the house of Israel ; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins *be* upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live ?

11 Say unto them, *As* I live saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live : turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?

12 Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression : as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness ; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his *righteousness* in the day that he sinneth.

13 When I shall say to the righteous, *that* he shall surely live ; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered ; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

14 Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die ; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right ;

15 *If* the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity ; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

16 None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him : he hath done that which is lawful and right ; he shall surely live.

17 ¶ Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the LORD is not equal : but as for them, their way is not equal.

18 When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.

19 But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.

20 Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

21 ¶ And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, *that* one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten.

22 Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came ; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning ; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.

23 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

24 Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land ; but

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*Ver. 10. If our transgressions, &c.] Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them ; how then can it be possible that we should live ?* These are supposed to be the words of impious persons, who, pretending to despair of God's mercies, take encouragement thence to continue in their sins.

*Ver. 13. If he trust to his own righteousness]* " If he rely upon the good works which he has done, and think " that some kind of worth in them will over-balance his " evil deeds." This seems to have been the opinion of the later Jews, who lay it down for a rule in their Mishna, that all Israel shall have a share in the blessed world to come : and is it not too much to be feared, that many of those who profess Christianity, embrace this dangerous and absurd opinion ?

*Ver. 15. If the wicked restore, &c.]* Robbery and violence would be too gainful a trade, if a man might quit all scores by repentance, and detain all he has gotten ; or if the father's repentance might serve the turn, and the benefit of the transgression be transmitted as an inheritance to the son. If the pledge remained, it must be restored ; the retaining of it is committing a new iniquity, and forfeits

any benefit of the promise. If he have it not, nor be able to procure it, his hearty repentance will be accepted through the blood of the covenant, without reparation : but to enjoy and to look every day upon the spoil, and yet to profess repentance is an affront to God Almighty, and a greater sin than the first act of violence, when he did not pretend to think of him, and so did not think of displeasing him. Whereas now he pretends to reconcile himself to God, and mocks him with repentance, while he retains the fruit of his wickedness with the same pleasure that he committed it.

*Ver. 21. And it came to pass, &c.]* The news of the taking and burning of Jerusalem was brought to that part of the Babylonish dominions where the Jewish captives were placed, in about a year and four months after the calamity happened, though some say much sooner. Many commentators think that this messenger came not to Ezekiel, simply to announce the taking of Jerusalem and the ruin of the temple, but the entire desolation of the country, the death of Gedeliah, and the last transportation of the people to Egypt. See Calmet and Grotius.

*Ver. 24. Abraham was one]* " If Abraham, being only  
" a single

we *are* many; the land is given us for inheritance.

25 Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?

26 Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land?

27 Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; *As* I live, surely they that *are* in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that *is* in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that *be* in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence.

28 For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease, and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.

29 Then shall they know that I *am* the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate, because of all their abominations which they have committed.

30 ¶ Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD.

31 And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee *as* my peo-

“ a single person, had the whole country of Judæa given “ him, there is much greater reason to conclude, that God “ will preserve the possession of it to us, who are a numerous part of Abraham’s posterity.” These men speak after the vain manner of the Jews, who fondly presume that they have a right to all the promises made to Abraham, without considering the vast difference which was between them and Abraham, both in faith and practice. The appellation of one is given to that patriarch in other places of Scripture, because he was singled out from the rest of his family, to be the original or head of the Jewish nation. See Lowth and Calmet.

Ver. 26. *Ye stand upon your sword*] *You stand in your highway, or the corners of the streets, and commit your abominations.* Houbigant. This expression seems to refer to their public and open profession of idolatry. Those who understand the expression as translated in our version, suppose the meaning to be, “ You stand like soldiers upon “ guard, and under arms; you only seek for occasion to “ commit acts of hostility and violence.”

Ver. 27. *They that are in the wastes*] *They that [trust] in the swords.* The forts and caves here mentioned, mean the strong-holds formed by nature in the rocks, or cut in the sides of the mountains. Palestine abounded with these, as we have had occasion to remark heretofore; particularly in the history of David.

Ver. 30. *Also, thou son of man*] Bishop Pococke informs us, that the Coptics spend their holy days in sauntering about and sitting under their walls in winter, and under the shady trees in summer. This, doubtless, is to be understood of those of the poorer sort, who have no places more proper for conversation with their friends: the better sort of houses in the East having porches or gateways, according to Dr. Shaw, with benches on each side, where the master of the family receives visits, and dispatches business; few persons, not even the nearest relations, having farther admission, except upon extraordinary occasions. Now will not these two circumstances greatly illustrate the passage before us? It is somewhat strange, that our translators

should have rendered the word **בְּ** *beke*, against thee; when the LXX rendered it, of, or concerning thee; it is the same Hebrew particle that is used, Psal. lxxxvii. 3. *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!* and the following words incontestably shew, that they were speaking honourably of Ezekiel, and indeed assuming the appearance of those whom Malachi mentions, chap. iii. 16. *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, &c.* It was winter, in the tenth month, answering to the latter end of December and first part of January, when these things were transacted; therefore they sat under the walls for the benefit of the sun, rather than under trees to avoid its heat, while they talked concerning Ezekiel; while persons among them in better circumstances sat in their porches or gateways. That they use their porches or gateways in winter as well as summer, appears from Bishop Pococke, who, waiting on a person of distinction in Upper Egypt [an aga of the Janizaries], found him sitting, according to their custom, under the gateway of his house, when he made him this visit on the 29th or 30th of December. The explication, therefore, of those commentators must appear something like inadvertency, who make this talking of Ezekiel by the walls, and in the doors of their houses, to signify the same thing with their talking of him in their public places of concourse, and in their private meetings. As this sitting and talking under the walls is particularly practised by the Coptics in their holy-days, may not these words of Ezekiel be supposed also to refer to such times? And if so, will they not shew that the Israelites observed their sabbaths in their captivity? And that so early as the time of the first destruction of Jerusalem, they used to assemble to the prophets on those days, to hear if they had received any messages from the Lord the preceding week, and to receive those advices which their calamitous circumstances made peculiarly seasonable? Those assemblies might be more ancient, but of this antiquity at least the passage here seems to make them. Such another assembly, it may be, was that mentioned in chap. viii. 1. See the Observations, p. 16.

ple, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, *but* their heart goeth after their covetousness.

32 And lo, thou *art* unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice,

*Ver. 32. Thou art unto them, &c.]* That is to say, they come to hear thee solely for their entertainment, not for their edification and improvement. This, it is to be feared, is not a complaint peculiar to Ezekiel, but one which many of those who deliver even the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified Saviour, have but too much reason to make. Of the numbers who sit attentively to a serious and well-delivered discourse, how few bring it home to themselves by a proper self-application! How many consider it merely as a *lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice!*

*Ver. 33. And when this cometh to pass, &c.]* Therefore when these things come to pass, (they shall come to pass immediately,) then, &c. "When you see my prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem actually come to pass, as will immediately be the case; then you will be convinced of the truth of my mission, and of your own inexcusable fault in despising my predictions." See ver. 21, 22. and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Once more the prophet is sent to the rebellious house of Israel. And we have here,

1. The office of a watchman described. In times of danger and invasion, when the people set a watchman to descry the approaching enemy, his business is, to wake, look out, and spread the alarm wherever he sees *the sword coming*; in which case having discharged his trust, his own fidelity will be approved; and if others take warning, they will be safe; if not, their blood will be on their own heads. But if the watchman be negligent or asleep, and the sword comes, and any soul, surpris'd for want of warning, perishes in his iniquity, then shall his blood be required at the watchman's hands. An awful charge! and well may they tremble for themselves who undertake to be watchmen to immortal souls against surrounding spiritual foes.

2. God applies this to Ezekiel. He is by divine commission appointed a watchman to the house of Israel; his business is, attentively to hear, and faithfully to report, the word of warning which God shall deliver to him: particularly he must say to the *wicked*, without distinction of persons, or fear of men's faces, *O wicked man, thou shalt surely die*. Wherever unrepented iniquity is found, there the heavy wrath of God will lie; and neither the greatest will be spared, nor the meanest overlooked. Death eternal will be the assured wages of sin; and wicked men are warned of this, that while there is yet hope they may fly from the wrath to come, to him alone who can and will abundantly pardon. If he neglected his duty, then the wicked should perish in his iniquity; for it will not excuse the careless sinner that he lived and died under a negligent pastor, when he had God's word in his hands; but his blood will God require at the prophet's hands; and ter-

rible will be the cry of the blood of lost souls in the ears of unfaithful ministers in a judgment-day. But if he was faithful, however obstinate the sinner might be, he would at least have the comfort of delivering his own soul; and though Israel be not gathered, he shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord. And this was not merely directed to him; but is also written for our instruction, and equally applicable to every one intrusted with the care of immortal souls; on whose fidelity so much depends, and whose unfaithfulness must be attended with such aggravated guilt and misery.

33 And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

2dly, The substance of a considerable part of this chapter we had in chap. xviii. and we need repeatedly to have such important truths inculcated upon us.

1. They quarrelled with God's dispensations of providence and grace, as if they were unjust and unequal; and would argue from the words with which the prophet concluded, chap. xxiv. 23. that it was in vain to call them to repentance and life, when their sins were bound upon them, and they must necessarily pine away in their iniquities; though the prophet had spoken continually of what would be the case, if they did not return to God, and with an express view to lead them to repentance.

*Note;* (1.) They who choose to err, will pervert the glorious truths of God, that they may have a plea to harden themselves in iniquity. (2.) Many, through hardened despair of pardon, rush presumptuously on their sins, and render their hearts thereby utterly obdurate.

2. God silences their unjust reflections.

[1.] Their despair had no foundation from God's word, but arose from their own wilfulness. Far from delighting in the death of a sinner, vengeance is God's strange work. He assures them, nay, by an oath confirms his word, that he would rather they would *turn and live*; nay, he warmly expostulates with them on the folly and perverseness of their conduct, and with repeated earnestness urges them to consider their ways, and turn from their iniquities, that they may not die, as otherwise they infallibly must. *Note;* (1.) Sinners must repent, or perish. (2.) God is grieved, speaking after the manner of men, when they perversely reject the calls of his word. (3.) The damnation of the sinner lieth at his own door; in the day of judgment he will have only himself to blame.

[2.] Their charge against God, as dealing unequally, is refuted, they themselves being judges; for what can be so evidently equitable as his procedure? 1. *When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live: if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity—he shall die for it.* The grand source of their ruin is their pride; they trust to their own righteousness, the most fatal rock against which a soul can split; for the moment a person places confidence in his own doings and duties, and fancies himself strong enough



## C H A P. XXXIV.

*A reproof of the shepherds. God's judgment against them: his providence for his flock. The kingdom of Christ.*

[Before Christ 587.]

**A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

enough to resist any temptation, he is already fallen. This high conceit is his mortal sin, and the sure forerunner of his ruin: puffed up with pride, he falls into the snare of the devil; *commits iniquity*, lives and dies in the practice of it; and the consequence of this is, he perishes everlastingly: all his pleas of former goodness will stand him in no stead at God's bar; he is found in unrepented guilt, and sinks under the curse into the belly of hell; and the more confident his former hopes were, the more dreadful will his disappointment be, and the more aggravated his guilt. Be not therefore high-minded, but fear. 2. *The wicked shall surely die*, such is the decree of the unchangeable God; not that this terrible sentence is designed to bar the door of hope against sinners, far from it; but to warn them of their danger, that they may escape from it. For, whenever a sinner turns to God, however aggravated his guilt, and numberless or enormous his transgressions, he shall, through Jesus, be accepted, and find that the Lord can as easily pardon many transgressions as few: and, for the encouragement of the trembling soul, God is pleased to assure us, that his arms are open; and, so far from upbraiding us with our rebellions, he will not so much as mention them in the day when we return to him. The past shall all be cancelled, the present blessed change shall only be remembered; and walking perseveringly, through the power of divine grace, in the way of truth and holiness, we shall assuredly find eternal life.

The conclusion from the whole is clear. God's ways are equal, theirs unequal; he will not own, therefore, these unreasonable and wicked men as his people, but turns them over to the prophet, determined to *judge them according to their ways*; and, however they dispute against him, he will glorify his righteousness in the destruction of the impenitent and apostates, and in the salvation of the penitent and faithful.

3dly, Ezekiel had been informed, chap. xxiv. 26. that one of those escaped out of the flames of Jerusalem, should give him an affecting narrative of the miseries which that devoted place had suffered; and lo! the messenger arrives. According to some, this was a year and four months after the fatal catastrophe; though others, by a different method of computation, suppose it only a month from the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

1. The prophet, the evening before the messenger arrived, by a divine impression, being made acquainted with the sad news that he brought, chap. xxiv. 27. had begun anew, after a long silence, with earnestness and zeal to address his unhappy countrymen; taking occasion from this sad event to warn them of the dreadful consequences of sin, and call them to repentance.

2. After he had heard the particulars of the siege, and destruction of the city, with the ravages of the Chaldean army through the country, he has a word sent unto him

2 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

from God, to be delivered to the miserable remnant who inhabited the wastes of Judæa, who, so far from being humbled with all the judgments that they had seen, and the sufferings that they had felt, continued just as bad as ever: and these were either Johanan and his associates, or some others who might still have continued in Judæa after he and his company were departed into Egypt.

[1.] Their pride was insufferable. Far from lamenting their sins, which had caused the desolations of the land, they count themselves as high in God's favour as Abraham; yea, in some respects they think they exceed him, possessing their inheritance by as good a title; and, being many, expect to keep possession of it against opposers.

[2.] Their other sins were great and aggravated. (1.) *Ye eat with the blood*, contrary to the divine prescription, Lev. xix. 26. or *upon the blood*, referring to the idolatrous practices of the heathen, who sat down round the blood of the sacrifices which they had offered to devils, and fancied they held communion with them thereby. (2.) *Ye lift up your eyes toward your idols*, worshipping these abominations. (3.) *Ye shed blood*, the blood of innocents. (4.) *Ye stand upon your sword*, place confidence in an arm of flesh. (5.) *Ye work abomination*, slaves to vile affections and unnatural lusts. (6.) *Ye defile every one his neighbour's wife*, which is justly reckoned among the most atrocious crimes.

[3.] The consequence of such wickedness could not but be fatal to them. *Shall ye possess the land?* such miscreants as the earth groaned to bear? No. The sword of vengeance will pursue them in the waste places; those who are in the open fields the beasts shall devour, and they who have fled to the forts and fortresses for shelter, shall die of the pestilence. One judgment shall follow upon another, till the land is completely desolate, their remaining strength they boasted of utterly ruined, and the very mountains desolate, without flocks or herds feeding on them: nor shall a traveller pass through the land; so uncultivated, so depopulated would it be, and filled with wild beasts. Such judgments would make them know an avenging God, who, having sworn to punish, will execute his threatenings, and give them the just recompense which their abominations deserve.

4thly, The Jews who remained in the land were, we find, bad, very bad: nor were many of the captivity much better, as evidently appears from the latter part of this chapter.

1. They were hypocritical mockers and revilers. They came with other worshippers, and sat, to appearance, gravely and attentively, as if desirous to hear the prophetic word; and in their professions before the prophet pretended much love: but their hearts were in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; covetousness reigned within; they were pleased with the prophet's manner, his expressions and elocution as a speaker, but paid no regard

3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: *but ye feed not the flock.*

4 The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up *that which was broken*, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

5 And they were scattered, because *there is no shepherd*: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek *after them*.

7 ¶ Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

8 *As I live*, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because *there was no shepherd*, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;

9 Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

11 ¶ For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold,

to the matter. It was the amusement of an hour; and when they were gone, they could readily join in the abuse cast upon him; and among their own party ridicule and revile the preacher, his doctrine, and his hearers. *Note*; (1.) Public persons, especially faithful ministers, will be the butt of obloquy. If they knew but half the evil said of them, it might discourage them; but God knows their revilers, and will punish them. (2.) It is a serious matter to hear God's word; they who make a jest of things sacred, will find by-and-by that God is not thus to be mocked. (3.) Many come to the ordinances in formality, and for fashion's sake, who never so much as expect edification from them. (4.) We often see a smooth tongue cover a malignant heart; externally, all is profession of love and regard, but rancour and enmity rage within. (5.) Many take pleasure in hearing the man and the minister, who pay no regard to the message; and while their ears are delighted, their hearts are untouched. (6.) Even among professors of religion, covetousness is a reigning sin; and nothing more effectually quenches the good impressions of God's word than this.

2. God's word will stand, when all contemners of it shall perish together. *When this cometh to pass*, (to, it will come,) however now scoffers despise the wrath of God, they will too late rue their folly; *then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them*, when the event verifies the prediction, and the threatened vengeance overtakes them.

#### CHAP. XXXIV.

*Ver. 1. Came unto me*] "It is probable that this prophecy immediately followed the preceding. At or before the arrival of the news that Jerusalem was conquered, the prophet was to speak of the tyranny and carelessness of the governors, and to promise the return of the people." Michaelis. Ezekiel still continues his prophetic cares and foresight toward those who survived the desolation of Jerusalem, both those who continued

in Jerusalem and also the captives elsewhere. Of the former some false hopes seem to have been formed by the captive Jews, that this remnant would be still able to preserve the existence of the Jewish state in Palestine. C. xxxiii. 24.

The negligence of the governors being pointed out as a cause of the incredulity of the people, the transition here is natural, and the connexion close between this prophecy and the foregoing one; as also between the beginning of this prophecy and its conclusion. For, considering that in part the people suffered for the faults of their shepherds, mercy now urged the prophet to declare from God that he would judge between them—save the flock, and—set up one shepherd over them, who should feed them, even his servant David.

*Ver. 2. Against the shepherds of Israel*] Hereby are meant the priests, the Levites, and teachers of the law; the kings, princes, magistrates, and judges; the prophet gives them here excellent instructions; shewing them, under the parable of the shepherds, what was their duty, and wherein they had fallen short. The metaphorical expressions are all plain, and easily applicable to the shepherds of the people above-mentioned.

*Ver. 3. The fat*] *The milk*. Houbigant; with all the versions.

*Ver. 4. Driven away*] *Gone astray*: and so ver. 16.

*Ver. 5. Because there is no shepherd*] *For want of a shepherd*.

*Ver. 6. My sheep wandered, &c.*] In following idols, and by making to themselves a religion after their own imagination, full of superstition and impiety. The priests and the princes of the people were so far from calling them back from these wanderings, that they were the first to follow them; nay, and even to go before, and set them the example. *There was none to search after, or bring them back*.

*Ver. 10. And cause them to cease*] *And will discharge them*.

*Ver.*

I, *even* I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep *that are* scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and *in* a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up *that which was* broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

17 And *as for* you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats.

18 *Scemetb it* a small thing unto you to

have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?

19 And *as for* my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.

20 ¶ Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, *even* I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.

21 Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad;

22 Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.

23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even* my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

24 And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken *it*.

25 And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

26 And I will make them and the places

*Ver. 13. I will bring them out*] “I will cause them to ‘return from their captivity.’” In all that follows we may observe two senses; one which respects the Christian church, congregated by the Lord Jesus Christ from all quarters of the world; and the other, which respects the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. It is certain, that we cannot understand in the letter all this which is here predicted concerning the flock of the Lord, solely of the synagogue. The following verses evidently point out the office of the Messiah; and, we doubt not, have also respect to the final restoration of the Jews. See Calmet, and the note on ver. 23.

*Ver. 16. But I will destroy, &c.*] Houbigant, after many of the versions, reads, *I will preserve the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment*: but the following verses, wherein a discrimination is made between the good and the bad, and the faults of the flock are reprov'd, seem to confirm our version.

*Ver. 23. And I will set up one shepherd*] That is, Jesus Christ, the true shepherd, who has given himself this name

both in the Prophets and in the Gospel; and who has perfectly fulfilled all the duties, the characters whereof have been before described. He is called *David*, because our Saviour sprung from David according to the flesh; because he possessed eminently and really all those qualities which the Scripture gives to David as the type of the Messiah; and because he was the person in whom all the promises made to David were fulfilled. Though this prophecy was, in a great measure, completed, when Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel, gathered into one the children of God, among whom were many of the lost sheep of Israel; yet it will receive a farther completion at the general conversion of the Jews. See Calmet.

*Ver. 25. I will make with them a covenant of peace*] The Lord Jesus Christ has procured for us a perfect peace. He is the peace predicted by Micah, ch. v. 5. Peace to men was announced at his birth: his Gospel is the Gospel of peace: he himself is the God and King of peace: in short, he it is who pacifieth all things, and who reconciles us to his heavenly Father through his blood. By the *evil beasts*

round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

27 And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.

28 And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them: but they shall dwell safely, and

none shall make *them* afraid.

29 And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more.

30 Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God *am* with them, and *that* they, *even* the house of Israel, *are* my people, saith the Lord GOD.

31 And ye, my flock, the flock of my pasture, *are* men, and I *am* your God, saith the Lord GOD.

*beasts* are meant the persecutors of the church, seducers and seduced; the impious and heretical. See Calmet.

*Ver. 29. A plant of renown*] That is to say, *A celebrated posterity*; meaning more particularly the Messiah, that *branch* from the root of David, so frequently foretold by the prophets.

*Ver. 31. And ye, my flock, &c.*] These words at the close of the chapter, explain the metaphor which runs through the whole: that which was said of a flock and its shepherd, is to be understood of men and their governors, and especially of God's people, whom he takes care of as a shepherd does of his flock. We may just observe, that the present is a chapter upon which both magistrates and the rulers of the church ought to meditate very seriously. The complaints which God here makes of false shepherds, and the terrible denunciations threatened against them, shew, that it is the business of pastors, with their utmost diligence, to watch over the sheep with which they are intrusted, and to provide with care and readiness for all their necessities; and that if they fail herein, they must give a severe account to God. This too lays an obligation upon princes and magistrates to govern faithfully and justly the people committed to their trust. What befel the Jews, who for the unfaithfulness of their teachers and magistrates were utterly destroyed, shews that it is the greatest misfortune to a nation to have wicked rulers; and that all who are in any degree concerned for the glory of God, and the edification of his church, have the utmost reason continually to beseech him, that he would always raise up to his people good and faithful pastors. See Ostervald.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. A woe denounced against the shepherds of Israel, the princes and magistrates, or the priests and Levites, who were the great authors of Israel's ruin; and though their station was so high, and their profession so respectable, yet neither would screen them from severe rebuke, nor exempt them from God's fearful wrath. Negligent pastors are the most criminal of all transgressors, and may expect the heaviest judgment.

2. The sin charged upon them is, enriching themselves at the expence of their neglected flocks; indifferent what became of the people committed to their charge, they never thought of feeding them, but of fattening themselves.

The *magistrates* took no pains to vindicate the oppressed, to relieve the poor, to suppress vice, or encourage religion: the *ministers*, intent only on their tithes and offerings, took no pains to seek the lost, to instruct the ignorant, recover the erroneous, warn the unruly, or comfort the feeble-minded; the souls of men seemed in no wise their concern. With *force and cruelty*, both in church and state, *they ruled*; and used to the purposes of oppression the power committed to their trust for the protection and edification of God's people; so that they had really no shepherd; yea, worse than none: for those who usurped the office, were in fact ravening wolves. Woe to the poor people that are in such a case!

2dly, The careless shepherds are cited to God's bar. God will punish them, and graciously rescue the flock which they have abused.

1. He will punish the shepherds for their neglect and rapaciousness. *God is against them*, and his wrath who can abide? He will call them to a severe account for the loss of every sheep of his flock that perished through their negligence. Zedekiah, and the princes who rebelled, shall bear the guilt of all the innocent blood which was shed in consequence thereof. And every lost soul shall cry for vengeance against the unfaithful minister who, unconcerned, suffered him to die in his iniquity. God will turn them out of their office, and suffer them no more to fatten on the spoil. The king and princes of Judah shall be hurled from their high estate, and cast into the depths of abject wretchedness, and those priests and Levites who abused their sacred office be degraded. *Note*; (1.) Ministers can never too often reflect upon the solemn account that they must one day make. (2.) God justly deprives oppressors of the power which they abuse.

2. God will himself take care of his believing people. Though their pastors are unfaithful, and neglect them, he will provide for them. *Behold, I, even I the Lord, am willing to save them; I will [1.] both search my sheep, and seek them out*, all who stretch forth their hands unto him; all who mourn for his pardoning love; and all his distressed people, whether under persecution, oppression, temptation, or any other affliction. And this was fulfilled primarily in the restoration of the Jews from their captivity; and is spiritually still fulfilling day by day; while by his word and grace the Lord is gathering in all those precious souls who will receive the offers of his love, calling them

## C H A P. XXXV.

*The judgment of mount Seir for their hatred of Israel.*

[Before Christ 587.]

**M**OREOVER the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

them out of darkness into his marvellous light; till he has accomplished his glorious plan of redemption, and his eternal kingdom come: may my soul in that day be the object of his care! [2.] He will *feed them upon the mountains of Israel, and cause them to lie down in peace and safety, in a good field, and a fat pasture.* The Jews, on their return to their own land, enjoyed abundance of blessings, and particularly the privileges of the sanctuary and ordinances of God's worship. And in the church, the mount of God, do all believers find the rich pastures of grace, and the sweet waters of divine consolation: his saints are inclosed as in a fold, under the protection of their Almighty Shepherd, are safe from all the powers of evil, and rest under his shadow with great delight: happy the people that are in such a case! [3.] He will not only recover these penitent souls from their wanderings, but *heal those of them that were hurt during their itate of departure from him, and strengthen those that were sick.* The awakened sinner feels his deadly wounds, his heart is broken with a sense of guilt, and weak he finds himself, and unable to resist his corruptions; but the Saviour who bought him with his own blood, pours in his precious balm to assuage his pains, and rescues him from his state of despair. By his Spirit he renews the minds of such, gives the medicine which heals their sickness, even his divine grace and pardoning love, which can save them from the bondage of corruption; and he strengthens their weakness, that they may be enabled to walk with him and please him.

3. We have a repetition of the determinations of God concerning the impenitent, to mark the certainty and terribleness of their destruction. *I will destroy the fat and the strong;* for he who glorifies his mercy in the salvation of the faithful will glorify his justice in the damnation of his and their enemies; *feeding them with judgment,* inflicting the righteous vengeance due to their iniquities.

3dly, The prophet turns from the shepherds to the flock, for they were of different kinds. The church of professors ever consisted of a mixed multitude, good and bad; but there is a discerning Shepherd, the Lord Jesus, here spoken of, who will shortly separate the precious from the vile.

1. A heavy charge is brought against some of the flock; the fat, the rams and he-goats, the wealthy who oppressed their neighbours, and, not content with the gains of extortion, embittered by their ill usage the little which remained to the poor flock, as if they took a pleasure in their distresses. Nay, they not only trod down the pastures, and fouled the waters, but *thrust with side and shoulder, and pushed the diseased with their horns,* adding affliction to the afflicted. Many apply this to the scribes and Pharisees, who devoured the poor, fouled the waters of truth by their traditions, and oppressed with their anathemas the poor of the flock, who confessed the Lord Jesus: though it may

2 Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophesy against it,

3 And say unto it, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate.

be also generally applied to wicked men in every age, who have copied these destructive ways, and, though in profession the flock of Christ, have shewn themselves the most inveterate enemies of his pious people; but God will judge them, deliver his believing people from them now, and make an eternal separation shortly between the precious and the vile.

2. Rich consolation is spoken to the faithful few. God will save them, nor will he suffer them to become a prey to their enemies; particularly by raising up the promised Messiah, under whose protection his people should dwell in safety.

[1.] His character and office are described. *I will set up one shepherd over them:* both Jew and Gentile under him shall become one fold; and by the divine appointment he is constituted the head over all things to his church; and he shall feed them by his word, his Spirit, his ordinances, his ministers; *even my servant David,* so called as being David's promised seed, and God's servant, as employed by him in the work of the salvation of lost souls: *a plant of renown,* most transcendently glorious in his person and offices, and exalted in the preaching of his Gospel.

[2.] For his sake *God will make with them a covenant of peace.* Man is by nature in a state of enmity with God, till Christ, our peace, brings us, who were far off, nigh unto God; then we become interested in the covenant of grace; *God engages to be our God;* and his servant David, the Lord Jesus, becomes our prince and Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, and to reign over and protect his faithful people, his *Israel,* all true believers; for these are his people, who love, serve, and enjoy him.

[3.] Inestimably great and precious are the privileges to which the flock of God—the faithful, become entitled, in virtue of this covenant of peace. While the Lord their God was with them, their deliverance was sure, and peace and plenty were now their happy portion. *They shall be safe* under the divine protection; their spiritual enemies, the evil beasts, subdued, and caused to cease out of the land: they shall be delivered from fear of evil; though in the midst of snares and temptations, God will preserve them; and, having broken the oppressors' yoke, and rescued them from those who served themselves of them, he will make them know he is the Lord, by blessed experience of his almighty power, grace, and love. They shall want no manner of thing that is good; all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus shall surround them. *I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing;* so eminently shall they be distinguished with his favours; and all who see them will call them blessed; yea, they shall themselves also be blessings to other. *And I will cause the shower to come down in his season;* the graces and consolations of his Spirit, which the Redeemer showers down upon the hearts of his believing people, according to their various necessities.

There

4 I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

5 Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed *the blood* of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time *that their iniquity had an end*:

6 Therefore, *as I live*, saith the Lord GOD, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee.

7 Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth.

8 And I will fill his mountains with his slain *men*: in thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword.

9 I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

10 Because thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine,

and we will possess it; whereas the LORD was there:

11 Therefore, *as I live*, saith the Lord GOD, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee.

12 And thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD, *and that* I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume.

13 Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me: I have heard *them*.

14 Thus saith the Lord GOD; When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate.

15 As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir, and all Idumea, *even* all of it: and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

*There shall be showers of blessing*: the greatest abundance of the richest gifts of God, pardon, adoption, holiness, freely bestowed upon the believing soul: *and the tree of the field shall yield her fruit*; the fruits of righteousness, which spring from these quickening showers of grace: *and the earth shall yield her increase*, in an abundance of converts raised up by the preaching of the Gospel. *They shall be no more consumed with hunger*, but be richly fed with that Bread which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world: *neither shall they bear the shame of the heathen any more*: God having appeared for them, and made it evident, by the dispensations of his providence and grace, that he is *their God*, their present portion, and exceeding great reward. The Jews, returned from captivity, enjoyed literally many of these blessings outwardly; but they are most eminently fulfilled to the Israel of God—the faithful, in every age, who in Christ Jesus are *blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things*.

#### CHAP. XXXV.

THE prophet goes on to shew, that the same reason, which will operate in favour of the Jews, will not operate in favour of the heathen; especially not in favour of the Jews' relations, the Edomites: for they shewed no mercy and therefore deserved to receive none; and, because they had a perpetual hatred, were to be made a perpetual desolation.

*Ver. 2. Set thy face against mount Seir*] That is, Edom. This prophecy is manifestly of the same year with the foregoing; for it is posterior to the siege of Jerusalem, and it precedes the desolation of Edom, which happened about the

fifth year after the taking of Jerusalem. I am of opinion, says Calmet, that the prophet marks out *here two disgraces* of Edom, the one by Nebuchadrezzar, the other by the Jews after their return from captivity. The latter is described here more particularly than the former. The prophet says, that as the Idumeans had hated their own blood, they should be persecuted by their own blood; that is, by the Israelites, their brethren. See ver. 6. He says afterwards, ver. 14. that their country should be made desolate at the time when *all the land should rejoice*; which can be appropriated to no other time than that which followed the restoration of the Jews from captivity. As to the first desolation caused by Nebuchadrezzar, it is well and fully expressed in the third and other verses.

*Ver. 5. In the time that their iniquity had an end*] That is, either at the time when God exercised against them the last chastisement of their iniquity: or at the time of their extreme affliction, when the anger of God was most inflamed against them. It is the greatest of all cruelties to insult the afflicted, and to add new sorrows to the unhappy. See Calmet.

*Ver. 7. And cut off from it him, &c.*] *And will cut off from it both the traveller and the inhabitant.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 9. Thy cities shall not return*] *Thy cities shall not be inhabited.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 10. Whereas the Lord was there*] *Whereas the Lord hath laid it waste.* Houbigant. See ver. 12. The two nations and countries, mean the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

*Ver. 14. When the whole earth rejoiceth*] *I will reduce thee*

## CHAP. XXXVI.

*The land of Israel is comforted, both by the destruction of the heathen, who spitefully used it, and by the blessings of God promised unto it. Israel was rejected for their sin, and shall be restored without their desert. The blessings of Christ's kingdom.*

[Before Christ 587.]

**A**L S O, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD:

*thee to desolation, the whole land rejoicing.* Houbigant. "After the return from captivity, when your neighbours shall be recovered from their past misfortunes, and shall have regained their prosperity, you shall be reduced to desolation." This happened under the Maccabees, who made war with the Edomites, and obliged them to receive circumcision. See 1 Macc. iv. 15. and v. 3.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, Mount Seir had before been arraigned and condemned: a second time, to shew the certainty of God's counsel concerning them, the prophet must repeat the charge and the judgment passed upon her. Since *God was against her*, he must *set his face against her too*.

1. The provocation given by the Edomites was, their enmity and ill-behaviour towards God's Israel. The hatred of Esau against Jacob had been transmitted as a deadly feud to his posterity: and now, that they had an opportunity to wreak their revenge upon the Jews, they failed not to improve it, and shed the blood of those who fled in the day of their calamity, unable to resist, when the measure of their iniquity was full, and their ruin completed. *Note;* (1.) The quarrels of parents frequently descend to their children; and even national antipathies are often deeply rooted; but the most *perpetual hatred* is that which ever glid and ever will subsist in the carnal mind against the children of God. (2.) It is base and cruel to take advantage of the distress of others, to oppress them, and add to their affliction.

2. The punishment denounced is, the utter desolation of their country. Since they had so lavishly shed blood, God will give them blood to drink. The mountains shall be filled with their slain, and the sword devour without mercy; so that, on whichever side they turned, death met them. Thus should the country be made *perpetual desolations*, and never more be restored to its former prosperity: and in these judgments God will make himself known to them, as the avenger of his people's wrongs; and sooner or later shall the revenge of the malicious be thus with fearful vengeance repaid.

2dly, We have farther instances of the wickedness of the Edomites.

1. In the blasphemies both against God and his people. *Thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine;* they thought of seizing the land of Judah and Israel for their own; *whereas, or though, the Lord was*

2 Thus saith the Lord God; Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession:

3 Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and *are* an infamy of the people:

4 Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the

*there;* which shewed their profaneness and impiety; as if, notwithstanding his presence and protection, they could and would possess it. They concluded because the land was desolate, that God had utterly abandoned the house of Israel, but it was far otherwise; for every boast and insolent word uttered against them, the Lord regarded as a reproach cast upon himself.

2. They rejoiced to see the desolations of Israel; their envy and hatred were thus gratified, and, with a malicious pleasure, they insulted over them.

3. God remarked their wicked words: he *heard*, and will avenge them; he will retaliate upon them all the anger, envy, and hatred that they shewed to Israel, and make them desolate as those over whom they rejoiced. Yea, when other nations shall see their miseries removed, Edom's desolations shall remain; or, as the words may be rendered, *The whole earth shall rejoice in the desolations which I shall make for thee*, pleased to behold their fall. And herein God will also glorify himself, and make his justice, power, and regard to his believing people, known in the destruction of their enemies. *Note;* (1.) Not an idle word escapes the divine cognizance; much less the hard speeches which profane and ungodly sinners utter against the Lord. (2.) They who maliciously rejoice in the death of others, by whom they hope to gain, may expect that others will express the same malicious pleasure over them, when the day of their fall arrives. (3.) God will order all the dispensations of his providence and grace in such a way, as to demonstrate his care and faithfulness toward those who love him.

## CHAP. XXXVI.

*Ver. 2. Because the enemy hath said]* This prophesy is a continuance of that preceding. The Idumeans had made their boast, that they should become masters of the mountainous parts of Judæa, where the ancient fortresses were placed, which commanded all the rest of the country. See Lowth and Calmet.

*Ver. 3. Because they have made you desolate, &c.]* *Because the residue of the nations, which surround you, gape over you, since you were laid waste, that you may become their possession, and ye are, &c.* Houbigant. The meaning of the last phrase in the verse is, "Your calamities have made you be-  
"come a proverb and a reproach among the heathen round  
"about you, according to the threatenings of the prophets  
"denounced against you." See Jer. xxiv. 9.

X x

*Ver.*



Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that *are* round about ;

5 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD ; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all *their* heart; with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey.

6 Prophecy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord GOD ; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen ;

7 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD ; I have lifted up mine hand : Surely the heathen that *are* about you, they shall bear their shame.

8 But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel ; for they are at hand to come.

9 For, behold, I *am* for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown :

10 And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, *even* all of it : and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded :

11 And I will multiply upon you man and beast ; and they shall increase and bring fruit : and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better *unto you* than at your beginnings : and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

12 Yea, I will cause men to walk upon

you, *even* my people Israel ; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them *of men*.

13 Thus saith the Lord GOD ; Because they say unto you, Thou *land* devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations ;

14 Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord GOD.

15 Neither will I cause *men* to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord GOD.

16 ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

17 Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings : their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman.

18 Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols *wherewith* they had polluted it :

19 And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries : according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.

20 And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These *are* the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land.

21 But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went.

*Ver. 6, 7. Behold, &c.]* We may point thus : *Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury. Because ye have borne the reproach of the nations, therefore, &c.*

*Ver. 8. For they are at hand to come.]* For these things are about to happen in a short time. "The time of the deliverance of my people approacheth." There can be no doubt that, though this prophecy may have an immediate reference to the return of the Jews from Babylon ; yet it has a farther reference to the general return of the Israelites, and to the universal reign of the Messiah. See Calmet.

*Ver. 10. And I will multiply men upon you.]* I will cause

that you may abound with a multitude of men from the whole house of Israel ; that the cities may be inhabited, and the waste places built. Houbigant.

*Ver. 20. These are the people, &c.]* The Lord was with them, yet are they driven out of his land. Houbigant. As much as to say, "See what profligate wretches these are, who call themselves by the name of God's peculiar people ; when it is evident that they are not so, by his having expelled them for their crimes out of the country which he has given them." See Houbigant.

*Ver. 21. But I had pity.]* I will therefore spare, for mine holy name, which the house of Israel hath, &c. Houbigant.

*Ver.*

22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

23 And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I

gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

29 I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.

30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good; and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

32 Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

33 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause *you* to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded.

34 And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.

35 And they shall say, This land that was

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*Ver. 22. I do not this for your sakes]* It cannot be denied, that it became the goodness of the God, to preserve the doctrine of the unity amidst an idolatrous world. But this could not have been effected according to God's plan of governing the moral world, but by a separation of one part from the rest; nor could such a separation be made any otherwise, than by bringing that part under God's peculiar protection. The consequences of which were, great temporal blessings. Now, as some one people must needs be selected for this purpose, it seems most agreeable to our ideas of divine wisdom, which commonly effects many ends by the same means, to make the blessings attendant on such a selection the reward of some high-exalted virtue in the progenitors of the chosen people. The separation was made for the sake of mankind in general; though one people became the honoured instruments, in reward of their fathers' virtues. And this is the language of the Scriptures, especially in this passage, where God promises to restore the Israelites after a short dispersion. "Thus saith the Lord, I do not this for your sakes, but for mine holy name's sake."

*Ver. 23. And I will sanctify my great name]* "I will give illustrious proofs of my power and goodness, and vindicate my honour from the reproaches wherewith it has been blasphemed among the heathens, because of your evil doings." This refers to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon; and it is observable, that this return was

remarked by the heathens as a signal instance of God's providence towards them. Their general conversion will be a much more signal proof of his fulfilling of the promises made to their fathers; and the consequence of it, no doubt, the complete conversion of the Gentile world.

*Ver. 25. Then will I sprinkle clean water, &c.]* The prophets generally borrow their images from the ceremonies of the Jewish religion, to convey an idea either of the detestable wickedness of the Jews, or of their amendment, as in this passage. Hence likewise the Jews derived their opinion of the Messiah; that one of his offices should be to *sprinkle* or *baptize*. Agreeably to which, when they suspected that John the Baptist was the Messiah, they expressly asked him why he baptized, if he were not the Christ? See *Isai. lii. 15. John, i. 19. 21.* and *Bishop Chandler's Defence.* It is in the church of Christ, says *Calmet*, that we behold the real and perfect accomplishment of the prophecy in the remaining part of this chapter. But it undoubtedly has also reference to the final restoration of the Jews.

*Ver. 27. And cause you to walk in my statutes]* "By preventing you with my grace, and inspiring you with a love for that which is good, which shall enable you to surmount your propensity to that which is evil. I will aid you with the succour of my grace, that you may thereby keep my judgments and do them."

desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.

36 Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.

37 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.

38 As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

*Ver. 38. As the holy flock*] The sheep and the lambs designed for the sacrifice at the three solemn festivals were very numerous, and at the same time the best of their kind. This also refers to Gospel-grace and blessings: and this whole prophecy will be fully accomplished at the general conversion and final restoration of the Jews.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The land of Israel was now desolate and depopulated; but God still thought upon the dust thereof. We have,

1. His compassionate regard towards this miserable country. It was become a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen. Their neighbours insulted them, and every tongue was ready to spread their infamy, to upbraid them with their sins, and mock at their sufferings; while the nations around them, the residue who had survived the judgments threatened, chap. xxv, xxvi. each seized that part of Judæa which bordered upon their own country, as their prey.

2. His jealousy for his believing people. Because with spiteful joy their enemies exulted in their miseries, and with daring intrusion entered the inheritance of the Lord, he hath spoken in the fire of his jealousy, and in his fury, that he will severely avenge their wrongs, and cover with shame and confusion these inveterate and malicious foes. *Note*: They who make God's people the subject of derision, will shortly be themselves exposed to everlasting shame and contempt.

3. God gives his believing people assurance of a happy restoration, and plenty of all good things in their own land; and the time is at hand. The mountains shall yield abundant fruit; though now uncultivated, they shall be tilled and sown; the cities that lie in ruins shall be replenished with inhabitants, and all the house of Israel, even all of it, not the two tribes only, but the ten tribes who went before into captivity, shall settle on their old estates, and see their flocks and herds multiplying under the divine blessing; and God will do better for them than at their beginnings; particularly with regard to the spiritual blessings bestowed in the days of the Messiah. Then should the mountains again become the abode of men, instead of wild beasts which had dwelt therein; the idolatries committed in them should cease, nor provoke God any more to bereave them of inhabitants; and the reproach which had been laid on the mountains of Israel by the heathen, as if they had devoured all who dwelt in them, shall for ever be at an end. Probably this prophecy looks to future times; and whatever fulfilment it received in the return of the Jews from Babylon, the perfect accomplishment of it is yet to come.

2dly, The chief end that God proposes is, the advancement of his own glory.

1. They had, indeed, forfeited all title to favour. By their sins they had dishonoured God, and defiled the land: so totally corrupted were they, that every thing they touched became in some sense unclean. Murder and idolatry marked their way, and provoked God to pour out his fury upon them, and to scatter them for their abominations into heathen lands. Yet even there all their sufferings were still ineffectual; they sinned yet more, and gave the adversaries of the Lord occasion to blaspheme. Their wicked lives brought a scandal on that name which they professed to reverence and serve, and the very heathen treated them with scorn. *These are the people of the Lord*: they mocked at their pretended relation to him; their conduct gave the lie to their professions; or it implied an insult on their God, as if, notwithstanding all the Jewish boasts, he were unable to save them from the hand of their enemies. *Note*: The sins of professors are the greatest scandal to religion, and give just occasion to the adversaries of the Lord to blaspheme: but woe unto him by whom the offence cometh!

2. God will glorify his great name and the riches of his grace in their deliverance. They had no reason to expect any thing from him but wrath to the uttermost, their provocations were so aggravated; but then the heathen would blaspheme the more: therefore, not for their sake, but for his own glory, he will interpose, and gather them from among the nations, and bring them to their own land.

3dly, Whatever accomplishment this prophecy had in the return of the Jewish people from captivity when they were for ever cured of all inclination to idolatry, it seems to have a more especial regard to Gospel times. We have,

1. Many great and precious promises given to God's faithful people. [1.] God will cleanse them from all their sins, by the blood of sprinkling removing their guilt, and by the efficacy of his grace delivering them from the power of their iniquities. [2.] He will give them a new heart, a heart changed by his divine energy from its former state of corruption, hardness, and unbelief; another spirit shall influence and guide them; the stony heart, insensible and obdurate, shall be taken away, and in its stead a heart of flesh shall be given them, tender and susceptible of every gracious impression. [3.] Having made new their hearts, he will make straight paths for their feet, and enable them to walk therein. [4.] He will take them into covenant with himself: *Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God*. [5.] He will give them plenty of all such good things as they need; particularly, what the Jews counted the greatest

C H A P. XXXVII.

*By the resurrection of dry bones, the dead hope of Israel is revived. By the uniting of two sticks, is shewed the incorporation of Israel with Judah. The promises of Christ's kingdom.*

[Before Christ 587.]

**T**HE hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

2 And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and lo, they were very dry.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can

greatest earthly blessing, they shall return to their own land; have abundance of corn and fruit; shall know no more famine as before; nor be reproached by the heathen, as forced to seek their bread from other countries; when, to the wonder and surprise of the surrounding nations, the land of Judæa, lately so desolate, shall be tilled, and become like the garden of Eden for fruitfulness; and the cities in ruins shall be fortified, and replenished with inhabitants. So soon can God's blessing make a barren land fruitful, as his curse makes the most fruitful land barren.

Many interpreters suppose, that all these promises are yet to receive their accomplishment in the latter day, in the recovery of the Jews from their present state of dispersion.

2. The effect of God's rich grace extended to them would be the unfeigned repentance of multitudes. *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and loath yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations.* Nothing brings the soul so soon to true humiliation, and to such a sense of the baseness and ingratitude of sin, as a view of God's pardoning love: then we begin indeed to loath ourselves; sin appears the abominable thing that God hates, and therefore we hate it too: every remembrance of the past covers us with genuine shame; and, though God hath forgiven us, we can never forgive ourselves for having ever offended a God so gracious.

3. God intends his own glory in what he does for them, they being utterly unworthy of the least regard; yet, though it is a matter of pure grace, he expects that they shall seek it in the way of prayer, and be confounded for their former evil ways; and he will give the answer of mercy, increasing them as a flock, *the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts*, immense numbers of sheep being driven on these occasions to Jerusalem for sacrifice, and vast multitudes of worshippers assembled in the courts of the Lord's house; so numerous and populous should their desolate land and cities become; since he hath spoken it, the accomplishment is sure. *Note;* (1.) Salvation is of grace; our righteousness and deserts are utterly excluded in regard to merit: God alone must be exalted in mercy. (2.) God's promises do not supersede, but encourage our prayers. They who restrain prayer before God, sin against their own mercies.

these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

4 Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

5 Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.

6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and,

C H A P. XXXVII.

*Ver. 1. The hand of the Lord was upon me]* It is the general opinion of the best commentators, that all this passed in vision. The first and great object of this prophecy seems evidently to be, the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. Bishop Warburton observes, that the messengers of God prophesying for the people's consolation in disastrous times, frequently promise a restoration to the former days of felicity; and, to obviate all distrust from unpromising appearances, they put the case even at the worst, and assure the people in metaphorical expressions, that though the community were as intirely dissolved as a dead body reduced to dust, yet God would raise up that community again to life. Though the generality of commentators, says Mr. Peters, regard this vision and prophecy as no other than a figurative representation and prediction of a return of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon, or some other of their captivities and dispersions; yet, perhaps, we shall find upon a more attentive consideration, that whatever hopes it might give them of a temporal and national deliverance or prosperity, yet there was evidently something farther designed; and that to comfort them in their distressed situation, with the prospect of a future resurrection in a proper sense, was at least as much intended by the Spirit of God, or rather more so than the other. See on ver. 10.

*Ver. 3. Can these bones live?] Shall these bones revive?* Houbigant, who observes very justly, that the question is not concerning the possibility of the fact; for the prophet well knew that God could do all things. But the Lord, introductory to what follows, asks him whether these bones should now revive, or not. And though this be the right interpretation of the place, yet a resurrection from the dead is very justly collected from it: for, "A simile of the resurrection (says St. Jerome) would never have been used to signify the restoration of the people of Israel, unless such a future resurrection had been believed and known; because nobody ever confirms uncertain things by things which have no existence." See Houbigant's note.

*Ver. 6. And I will lay, &c.] For, &c.*

*Ver.*

behold, a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was* no breath in them.

9 Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

11 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.

12 Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

13 And ye shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

14 And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own

*Ver. 9. Prophecy unto the wind, &c.]* It is very remarkable, that our Saviour not only appeals to Moses and the prophets, in attestation of his own divine mission and character; but where he treats of the resurrection and a general judgment, so evidently alludes to the words of the prophets, which were *read in their synagogues every sabbath-day*, that his audience could not but perceive it, and make suitable reflections on it. Compare Luke, xxi. 27. and John, v. 27. with Dan. vii. 13, 14. and John, v. 28. with Dan. vii. 2. So here the prophet is bid to prophecy unto *the wind, or spirit*; and accordingly, at the voice of the prophet, here called *Son of man*, as a type of another and greater person so called, the dry bones came together, and at length the breath or spirit came into them. Conformably with which, our Saviour tells us, that *the hour is coming, in which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, &c.* See John, v. 28, 29. Matt. xxiv. 31. and Peters.

*Ver. 10, 11. An exceeding great army]* This vision itself, in the first place, affords a very lively image of the resurrection; next, they who are raised to life again, are said to be an *exceeding great army*; the Hebrew is still more emphatical, and even labours for expression: *אֲרָמָה אֲרָמָה* *mood mood, A very very great army*; like that of *all nations and kindreds and people, which no man could number.* Rev. vii. 9. It is yet farther observable, that these dry bones, so miraculously raised to life, are called, ver. 11. *The whole house of Israel*; an expression to which the return from the captivity of Babylon can never wholly answer; for it is most certain, that the whole house of Israel did not return: no, nor yet the whole house of Judah, but only a small remnant of them. If some more glorious return of that people, and their conversion to the Christian faith, is still to be expected, (Rom. xi. 25, 26.) yet it may be questioned whether even this will fully answer the intent of the prophecy: for, to have a right notion of this matter, it may behove us to consider carefully the complaint of the captive Jews, to which this prophetic message is applied as a remedy. The complaint we have in these words; *Behold, say they, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: We are cut off for our parts*; that is to say, as to ourselves. Hebrew *יָסַדְנוּ* *lanu.* Certainly there must be something meant by this ex-

pression; and if there be, let any one judge whether a deliverance of their sons and grandsons from the Babylonish captivity (for none can say that they were promised it before the end of seventy years, of which the far greater part was still behind,) could any way answer the complaint here made, of a lost hope, or a despair, *as to themselves*; much less a promise of a deliverance to their late posterity, at the distance of some hundreds or thousands of years, though we conceive it to be never so great and glorious. Take the words that follow, then, in their obvious sense, and as a promise of some personal happiness to those who faithfully adhere to God in all their straits and difficulties, and it affords a consolation highly worthy of the divine omnipotence and greatness to reach out to his creatures; and though we suppose them before acquainted with the doctrine of *the resurrection*, yet there is something in this plain and circumstantial account of it, delivered with such high authority, which could not but renew upon their minds a pleasing hope and expectation of it, sufficient to silence all complaints.

*Ver. 12—14. Behold, O my people]* That is, you who are truly such: for this most gracious appellation seems evidently taken from the words of the covenant so often mentioned; *I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* There would be no difficulty in this passage, if we only take *the land of Israel*, ver. 12. and *your own land*, ver. 14. as meant of that land of promise, or that *better country*, which the faithful all along believed in, and hoped for, Heb. xi. 16. that land, in short, which the true Israel of God should inherit for ever, Isai. lx. 20, 21. Such a prospect as this was exactly fitted to obviate their complaints, which I think no other sense of the words can do fully. I might add, that as the doctrines of the Messiah and the future state are constantly united in the views and declarations of the prophets, so this plain description of a resurrection is followed by as plain a prophecy of the Messiah in the latter part of the chapter; who, by the well-known appellation of *David*, from whom he was to descend, was to be the *one shepherd, king, and prince, over Judah and Ephraim, or the converted Jews and Gentiles.* See ver. 24, 25.

land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the LORD.

15 ¶ The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions. Then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel his companions:

17 And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

18 And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou *meaneſt* by these?

19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

20 And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.

21 ¶ And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children

of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

22 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

24 And David my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever.

26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them,

*Ver. 16. Take thee one stick, &c.] Take—and write upon it, Judah, and the children of Israel, &c. Then—Joseph, the stick Ephraim, and of all the house, &c.* The design of this metaphorical action was to mark out the reunion of the tribes, after the return from Babylon; but, in a more elevated sense, the assemblage, not only of the Jews of all the tribes, but also of the people of all nations, to the church of Jesus Christ. See Rom. xi. 17, 18. the subsequent verses of this chapter, Numb. xvii. 2. 2 Chron. xi. 12, 13. 16. and Calmet.

*Ver. 23. But I will save them, &c.] And I will save, or deliver them from all their transgressions.* Houbigant after the LXX.

*Ver. 26. A covenant of peace]* Could this expression at all agree with the ancient covenant? When have we seen an age, half an age, of peace in Israel, except in the time of the Judges? The whole history of the Jewish nation is nothing more than a recital of wars and continual divisions; and if we understand it of peace between God and his people, where shall we find this people faithfully attached to the Lord during one century only? We have only to open the books of the prophets, and the other sacred records, to remark their infidelities and perpetual rebellions against God. This expression, therefore, can only respect the New Testament, whereof Jesus Christ,

the Prince of Peace, is the Mediator, and who gives us that true peace which surpasses all conception. See Philip. iv. 7. and Calmet. Instead of, *I will place them*, Houbigant reads, *I will be their leader*. The expression, *my sanctuary* or *tabernacle*, which refers to the tabernacle or temple placed among the Jews, is typical of Jesus Christ, who is the true tabernacle, pitched by God, and not man. See Pf. lxxxix. 3. Jer. xxxii. 40. Ezek. xxxiv. 25. 2 Cor. vi. 16. Rev. xxi. 3.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The vision. Under the powerful impulse of the Spirit, the prophet is carried into the valley full of dry bones, disjointed and scattered in confusion; an emblem of the Jewish people now captives in Babylon, so dispersed that, to human view, their recovery was as much despaired of as the restoration of dry bones to life. Therefore, when asked, *Can these bones live?* he replies, *O Lord, thou knowest*. Nothing short of Omnipotence can effect the amazing miracle.

2. The prophet is commanded to *prophesy upon* or *over these dry bones*, and to call on them to attend; *O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord*. And since, without a divine energy accompanying his word, their restoration to life could not be accomplished, he is ordered to pray unto the Spirit

and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

27 My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Spirit for his quickening influences; *Come, O Breath, or Spirit, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live*: and, though the work might seem strange and fruitless, the prophet obeyed. *Note*; While the ministers of the Gospel are crying aloud to sinners, they must be looking up to God, and pouring out their souls in prayer to him who quickeneth the dead.

3. A wonderful effect followed his prophesying; for they who go forth in dependence on the divine power, shall see the wonders of God's grace. A noise and shaking ensued, each bone joined his fellow, and flesh and sinews grew upon them; and, at the prophet's invocation, life entered into them, according to the promise, and they stood up, an exceeding great army. Thus, by the proclamation of Cyrus, the captives were assembled; and, by the divine Spirit animated, they were enabled to overcome all the difficulties in their way. And we have here also a representation, [1.] Of our spiritual resurrection from the death of sin; by the preaching of the word a shaking is occasioned among the souls dead in trespasses and sins; deep convictions make them tremble; and to those souls which yield to those convictions, spiritual life is communicated by the power of the Holy Ghost through faith in Christ. [2.] Of the resurrection of the body in the last day, when all our scattered atoms shall be reunited, and the same body be raised by the power of God to life eternal.

4. The application of the whole to the house of Israel. They were these dry bones; reduced to the lowest state of abject misery, and abandoning themselves to despair. But in the time of our deepest distress God will make his power and grace more eminently known, if we turn to him; therefore the prophet is commanded to assure them, that God will deliver them from their captivity, which was like opening the graves to the dead, and give them life, in their restoration to the comfortable and peaceable possession of their own land. God hath spoken, and will perform it; they may confidently trust him. *Note*; (1.) In times of sore temptation, and long continued distress, our faith is too often ready to faint, and unbelief to prevail. (2.) Though we despair of ourselves, our state is not therefore desperate; God can do for us more than we can think.

2dly, For the encouragement of the faithful among the captives, great things are promised which God will do for them.

1. The two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, so long separated, and so often vexatious to each other, shall be reunited, and become one people; and this is represented by the joining of two sticks in the prophet's hand; on one of which was inscribed the name of Judah and his companions, the tribe of Benjamin and those of the other tribes who on the revolt cleaved to the house of David; on the other the name of Ephraim, and his companions the house of Israel, of which Samaria, that lay in the lot

28 And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

of Ephraim, was the capital. The people who saw the sign would naturally be inquisitive, and desire to know the meaning; and he must inform them, that as these sticks became one in his hand, so should they become one people in God's hand; no mutual jealousies, no jarring discord, shall remain; but, returning together from their captivity, they shall become one nation, under one king: which was primarily fulfilled on their return from Babylon; but seems principally to refer to Gospel times, when, under the king Messiah, Jews and Gentiles shall become one people, the partition wall being broken down, and they shall have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and be one fold under one Shepherd.

2. All their idolatries shall be for ever done away. After their return from Babylon they never more relapsed into idolatry: God, having saved them from the *places* of temptation, delivered them also from all inclination to their former idolatrous abominations. *Note*; (1.) It is a singular mercy when God saves us from the places and persons who have been a temptation to us, and by his gracious providence removes us from the evil. (2.) God will save all sincere believers from their sins; not only from their actual prevalence, but he will mortify also their desire after them; and indeed, unless the heart be cleansed, it would signify little to have the temptation merely removed.

3. They shall be taken into covenant with God: *They shall be his people*, his grace will cause the glorious change in their repentant souls; and *he will be their God*, to bless, preserve, and protect them. *David*, the Messiah, the Son of David, shall be their *king* and *shepherd*, to guard them from their enemies, to feed them under his care, making all his believing people obedient in all things to his blessed will, if they simply, fully, and constantly cleave to him.

4. They shall enjoy in peace the inheritance of their ancestors, transmitting it to children's children; and shall be safe and happy under the rule of their anointed king Messiah. And this seems to direct us, for the full accomplishment of the prophecy, to future times; when this unhappy people, now so dispersed, shall receive the Lord's Christ, and to the end of time enjoy the blessings of his government. *Note*; Christ's subjects, the children of Zion, may well be joyful in their king.

5. God himself will dwell in the midst of them in a glorious manner in those last days. They shall not only be increased and established, but enjoy the special tokens of his presence. His sanctuary and tabernacle, erected among them, shall never more be destroyed; Jesus, the true tabernacle, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, shall be in the midst of them; and in his church they shall see his glory, and maintain communion with him in the ordinances of his service, and find, to their unspeakable comfort, God to be their god, while they share in all the blessings of his people.

6. God will be glorified among the heathen in such his



CHAP. XXXVIII.

*The army and malice of Gog: God's judgment against him.*

[Before Christ 587.]

AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him,

3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.

4 And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords:

5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet:

6 Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters; and all his bands; and many people with thee.

7 Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them.

8 ¶ After many days thou shalt be visited; in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.

9 Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm; thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land,

dispensations of mercy toward his Israel; *They shall know that he doth sanctify Israel*, by such evident marks of his love, by such powerful operations of his grace upon them, and by the erection of his sanctuary among them. *Note;* They who enjoy the privileges of the sanctuary, must shew the influence it has upon them in the sanctification of their hearts and lives.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

*Ver. 2, 3. Set thy face, &c.]* "This (says Calmet) is one of the most difficult prophecies of the Old Testament. There are very few which have more divided both ancient and modern interpreters. Not to embarrass my commentary too much, (continues he,) I have treated of it in a particular dissertation. Gog appears to me to be Cambyſes king of Persia, who, upon his return from the war against Egypt, came into the land of Israel, and died there. According to this hypothesis, we may, I think, very aptly explain every part of the prophecy;" and accordingly Calmet's commentary and dissertation wholly proceed upon this supposition. Gog and Magog are mentioned in Rev. xx. 8. and these, says Bishop Newton, seem to have been formerly the general names of the northern nations of Europe and Asia, as the Assyrians have been since, and the Tartars are at present. The prophecy in the Revelation alludes to this of Ezekiel in many particulars; both the one and the other remain yet to be fulfilled; and therefore we cannot be absolutely certain that they may not both relate to the same event. But it seems more probable, that they relate to different events: the one is expected to take effect before, but the other will not take effect till after the millennium. Gog and Magog in Ezekiel are said expressly, ver. 6, 15. and chap. xxxix. 2. to come from the north quarters, and the north parts; but in St. John they come from the four corners, or quarters of the earth. Gog and Magog in Ezekiel bend their forces against the Jews, resettled in their own land; but in St. John they march up against the saints and church of God in general. It may therefore be concluded, that Gog and Magog, as

well as Sodom, and Egypt, and Babylon, are mystic names in the book of Revelation; and that the last enemies in the Christian church are so denominated, because Gog and Magog appear to be the last enemies of the Jewish nation; who they shall be, we cannot pretend to say with the least degree of certainty. See Bishop Newton's Dissert. vol. iii. p. 328. Houbigant says, that the prophet here means the Scythians, who are the descendants of Magog, the son of Japheth; and whose neighbours were the people of Rogh, Meshech, and Tubal; that is to say, the Russians, Muscovites, and Tibareni, or Cappadocians; and thus Theodoret, Josephus, &c. understand it. Instead of, *The chief prince*, Houbigant reads, *The prince of Rogh*. It seems most probable, that this very difficult prophecy refers to a future event, and consequently every interpretation of it must be precarious and conjectural.

*Ver. 4. And I will turn]* *And I will turn thee about, and put hooks into thy jaws, after I have brought thee forth, &c.*

*Ver. 5. Persia]* The Persians are here mentioned among the auxiliary forces of Gog, which seems to subvert the opinion of Calmet; for it appears by no means probable, that the Persians should be mentioned as auxiliaries in the army of a king of Persia. See Houbigant, and the next verse.

*Ver. 6. Gomer, &c.]* Or, according to some, Phrygia, and all her bands; the Cappadocians of the north quarters, and all their bands. See Gen. x. 2.

*Ver. 7. Be thou prepared]* Come, make thy preparations, thou and all, &c. meaning the warlike preparations. But Cambyſes made no warlike preparations against Judæa, nor entered that country before he had lost his army in Egypt. These preparations, therefore, cannot properly refer to him. See Houbigant.

*Ver. 8. The land that is brought back, &c.]* That is, from the sword of the Chaldeans. Houbigant renders the next clause, *And gathered out of many nations to the mountains of Israel, which have been long waste, when all of the people who go forth shall dwell safely.*

Y y

Ver.

thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee.

10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, *that* at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought:

11 And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates,

12 To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places *that are now* inhabited, and upon the people *that are* gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.

13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

14 ¶ Therefore, son of man, prophecy, and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know *it*?

15 And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army:

16 And thou shalt come up against my

people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.

17 Thus saith the Lord GOD; *Art* thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days *many* years that I would bring thee against them?

18 And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, *that* my fury shall come up in my face.

19 For in my jealousy *and* in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;

20 So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that *are* upon the face of the earth shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.

21 And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother.

22 And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many

*Ver. 12. Upon the desolate places*] Judæa is here described as a land which lay *desolate* before the Jews returned to it. The Jews after the captivity were a *people gathered out of the nations*, for they were very much mixed with other people.

*Ver. 13. Tarshish*] Houbigant reads, *Tartessus*, with all the villages.

*Ver. 14. Shalt thou not know it?*] *Thou shalt be raised up.* Houbigant, after the LXX, and very agreeably to the context.

*Ver. 17. Of whom I have spoken in old time?*] It is doubtful by what prophets God foretold the irruption of Magog; but though nothing of this kind is found in the prophets that remain, it is clear, that Ezekiel was not the first who foretold these things. Many of the sacred pages are lost, which might probably be extant when Ezekiel delivered this prophecy. Houbigant; who renders the last

clause thus, *That I would bring thee against them in these days and years.*

*Ver. 18. That my fury shall come, &c.*] *My anger and my fury shall increase.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 20. So that the fishes, &c.*] There is nothing hyperbolic in this; for the prophet describes a terrible earthquake, whereby the mountains are shaken, and great fragments of rocks precipitated from their tops, to the great terror and astonishment of every part of the creation. See Houbigant. Instead of *shake*, we may read *tremble*.

*Ver. 21. I will call for a sword*] Calmet himself confesses upon this verse, that we do not read in the history of Cambyses of any war which he maintained on the mountains of Israel. The Hebrews indeed, says he, were in no condition to resist him; and he farther allows ingenuously, that there is nothing in the history of this prince which

people that *are* with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.

23 Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify

myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

which can justify the execution of that part of the prediction which is at the end of the next verse.

*Ver. 22. Fire, &c.]* וַיִּשְׂרַף *vaeish.* 3 MSS. Syr. According to this reading we may translate, "And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood: and an overflowing shower, and great hailstones, and fire, and brimstone, will I rain upon him." Compare Rev. xx. 8, 9. where see Lowman, that the event may be literally fulfilled by a combination of enemies to the Christian name. It is plain, that the extraordinary circumstances mentioned ver. 19—22. remain to be accomplished on the future enemies of the Jews, when his people are as a nation reinstated in God's favour.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, Various have been the conjectures concerning Gog and Magog; the former the king, the latter probably the kingdom: and as uncertain are the countries of Meshech and Tubal. Some suppose that they have a particular reference to the ravages of Antiochus, and other enemies of Israel, after their return from their captivity, &c. whilst others interpret them of the later enemies of God's church, particularly of the Turks and Tartars: (see the Annotations.) Whoever they are, their attempts shall issue in their own confusion, and God will glorify himself in judgment upon them.

1. God resolves to blast their enterprizes, great as their forces are, and terrible as their armament appears; and therefore his people need not fear, however threatening the danger. *Note;* They who have an omnipotent God for them, need not be concerned who are against them.

2. The confederacy against God's Israel is strong, and the army furnished with every weapon of war. Persia, Ethiopia, Lybia, Gomer, are auxiliaries; and under the conduct of Gog, their mighty general, as their guard and leader, are bidden, ironically, to prepare for the battle. The armament is directed against the land of Israel, against those who are brought back from the sword, recovered from their dispersion, and now dwelling safely, without fear of evil, without walls or gates, and therefore seem to be an easy prey to the invaders. Not doubting of his success, the neighbouring nations of Sheba and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish shall congratulate Gog on his certain victory, or it may be envying him the spoil that he is about to seize; or, as young lions, desirous to share it with him. Like a rising storm, he threatens to sweep all before him, and, sure of his prey, thinks of nothing but reducing the land to the former desolations from which it has now recovered. Such are the evil thoughts of this proud enemy, which God takes notice of, and for which he will punish him severely. *Note;* (1.) The beginning of all evil is from within; *out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,* and they produce wicked works. (2.) They who are most confident of success, are often most fearfully disappointed.

3. Whatever success may at first seem to follow the enemy, the issue will be fatal: *after many days thou shalt be visited.* Thus Antiochus, though he prevailed far, was at last brought low; and the Ottoman empire, which has arisen to such a height of power, but now begins to totter, will also soon be destroyed.

2dly, The prophecy is repeated to shew the certainty of the event.

1. The enemy shall hear of the peace and plenty that God's Israel enjoy, and how securely they dwell; and that shall induce him to come up, as secure of success; or, it may signify the vanity of his attempt: God will make him know that no foe can disturb those whom he causeth to dwell in safety. When God therefore brings him up, it is not for spoil, but to be himself for a prey; that the heathen may know the jealousy of the Lord over his people, and be confounded: and in judgment he will be glorified in the destruction of his enemies and theirs.

*Note;* (1.) All must contribute to advance the glory of the divine perfections; even the wicked shall cause his righteousness to be exalted in their sufferings. (2.) He who touches God's believing people, touches the apple of his eye; and he will avenge their wrongs.

2. God hath of old time foretold the invasion, that his people might not count it strange when it should come in *the latter days.* Many things, probably, the prophet spoke by divine inspiration, which are not recorded: and by another name the same enemy here spoken of may have been intended, as Deut. xxxii. 42. Isai. xxvii. 1. Joel, iii. 1. *Note;* Into whatever troubles the church may fall, there is effectual security given in the prophetic word for the continuation of the work of God to the end of time.

3. The enemy shall be utterly destroyed: and terrible is the scene of havock here described. God's indignation rises at this insolent invader of his people, and flames of wrath flash from his eyes; in terrors at his frown the earth trembles; even the birds and beasts, as well as men, affrighted, quake; the mountains and precipices fall, and every fortress is laid in the dust: the swords of this terrible host shall be turned against each other, pestilence shall devour them, and blood in rivers flow; a storm of vengeance shall descend from heaven upon them, as upon Sodom; hailstones, fire and brimstone, and ruin, utter and fearful, shall overtake them. *Note;* (1.) They who have been a terror to others, God can easily make a terror to themselves. (2.) God cannot want instruments of vengeance: the very sword of his enemies shall turn its point against them when he so ordains, and they shall become their own executioners.

4. God will be glorified in the execution of these his judgments, and will display his power, justice, and truth, to the conviction of many nations, who shall be brought, by what they behold, to acknowledge him the only true God, and to ascribe to him the glory due unto his name.

## C H A P. XXXIX.

*God's judgment upon Gog. Israel's victory. Gog's burial in Hamon-gog. The feast of the fowls. Israel, having been plagued for their sins, shall be gathered again.*

[Before Christ 587.]

**T**H E R E F O R E, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

2 And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel:

3 And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand.

4 Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.

5 Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.

6 And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

7 So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

## C H A P. XXXIX.

*Ver. 6. I will send a fire, &c.]* That is, into the country of Gog. Gog is supposed to dwell or to have dwelt between the Caspian and the Euxine sea; which is referred to by the expression *in the isles*, or on the maritime coasts. This *fire* seems to signify that the land, after the army of Gog had left it, should be laid waste by the neighbouring people.

*Ver. 8. Behold, it is come]* The prophet, as is very frequent, speaks, in the rapture of prophecy, of this event as if already completed. See Rev. xvi. 17.

*Ver. 9. And they shall burn them, &c.]* That is, for a long time; a certain for an uncertain number. There shall be in the country so great a quantity of military weapons, that they shall serve them for a long time for fuel. We should remember, that they do not make very large fires in those hot countries. Mariana, in his Spanish History, book ii. chap. 24. relates, that after the victory which the Spaniards gained over the Saracens in 1212, they found so many spears, and other warlike weapons of

8 ¶ Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken.

9 And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the hand-staves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years:

10 So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD.

11 ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it, The valley of Hamon-gog.

12 And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land.

13 Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown, the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD.

14 And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain

wood, as served them four years for fuel. See Calmet. Bishop Lowth observes, on Isai. ix. 4, 5. that some heathen nations burnt heaps of arms to the supposed god of victory; and that among the Romans this act was an emblem of peace. Among God's people it might shew trust in him as their defender. Archbishop Newcombe observes on the present passage, "The victory shall be so great, that, during this period of time [seven years], they shall suffice for fires on the mountains, and in the open fields; where the slain shall fall, and whither the inhabitants of the adjoining cities shall occasionally go forth."

*Ver. 11. A place there of graves]* An illustrious place for sepulture; the valley of passengers, opposite to the sea; through which the travellers shall pass stepping their noses. Houbigant. According to the Chaldee, the sea here spoken of was that of Gennezareth. The valley near this lake or sea is called the valley of the passengers, because it was a great road, by which the merchants and traders from Syria, and other eastern countries, went into Egypt. See Gen. xxxvii. 17, 25. and Calmet.

*Ver.*

upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search.

15 And the passengers *that* pass through the land, when *any* seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog.

16 And also the name of the city *shall be* Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land.

17 ¶ And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, *even* a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.

18 Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan.

19 And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.

20 Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD.

21 ¶ And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them.

22 So the house of Israel shall know that I *am* the LORD their God from that day and forward.

23 And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword.

24 According to their uncleanness, and according to their transgressions, have I done unto them; and hid my face from them.

25 ¶ Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name;

26 After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made *them* afraid.

27 When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations;

28 Then shall they know that I *am* the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there.

*Ver. 14. After the end of seven months.]* Houbigant reads this, *And they shall search for them even to the seventh month.*

*Ver. 17. Speak unto every feathered fowl.]* It was the custom for persons who offered sacrifices to invite their friends to the feast, which was made of the remainder. So here the prophet, by God's command, invites the beasts and fowls to partake of the sacrifice of his enemies. Whoever compares Psal. lxxviii. 48. Deut. xxxii. 24. Hab. iii. 5. and Isai. xxxiv. 7. must confess, that the prophet had all these passages in his eye: but at the same time, from a luxuriance of expression, he has both enlarged upon, and surpassed them. He dwells as long as he can upon this subject; he sets it in all the variety of lights which it will bear, and leaves no room for any that come after him to add or improve; unless we except that passage of St. John, Rev. xix. 17, 18. which is certainly superior in sublimity to this of the prophet. See Michaelis's Notes, p. 110.

*Ver. 18. Drink the blood of the princes of the earth.]* That is, the fowls and beasts mentioned before, *shall drink, &c.* There cannot be a greater instance of disgustingness, and of inveterate malice to the Scriptures and the people

of God, than Voltaire has shewn by his infamous misrepresentation of the passage before us; endeavouring to fix it as an opprobrium upon the Jews, that they sacrificed human beings to the Deity. After urging what he calls *prossi*, he adds, "Nay, Ezekiel himself, in order to encourage them [the Jews], promises them also that they shall eat of human flesh: *Ye shall eat both the horse and his rider, and drink the blood of princes.*" Can any person, with the least candour, conceive that this writer really mistook, or misrepresented this passage through downright ignorance?—The supposition is impossible; and in this view, what a heart must he have had, who could thus daringly traduce the sacred oracles of God; and on how wretched a master do they pin their faith, who blindly follow the delusive dictates of so vain and perverse a philosopher!

*Ver. 28. And have left none of them; &c.]* Amid the variety of conjectures passed upon these chapters, may we not be allowed to add one more;—proposed merely as a quere to the learned, and as a subject of investigation? namely, that this prophesy *primarily* refers to the judgment of God by Cyrus upon the Babylonians, and the restoration of the Jews in consequence; and *secondarily* to some future judgment.

29 Neither will I hide my face any more upon the house of Israel, faith the Lord GOD.  
from them: for I have poured out my Spirit

judgment, introductory to their grand restoration; for that the last verse of this chapter refers to the effusion of Gospel-grace, there can be no doubt. The last clause of it should be rendered, *After, or when I shall have poured out my Spirit, &c.* according to Houbigant. Certainly, it is as reasonable to understand this of Cyrus as of Cambyfes; and Calmet has well observed, that it is nothing extraordinary in the style of the prophets, to disguise the proper names of the princes or persons of whom they speak. If they were always to name persons, and to express them in a formal and exact manner, the prophecy would differ nothing from a history. I would just add, that, to understand this of the fall of Babylon, and the restoration of the Jews, seems far more consonant to the general tenor of Ezekiel's prophecies, than to refer it to any distant and unknown people and event; and we shall find by turning back to those great prophets, whom we have before considered, that they have not failed to foretel this event; and it is reasonable to suppose, that Ezekiel, who is so similar to them in subject throughout, would not omit to do so. The reader will observe several very similar traces in their prophecies respecting the fall of Babylon, to this of Ezekiel's, concerning the fall of Magog; and if Ezekiel's prophecy (on this subject suppose) be more dark and obscure than theirs, we have a very sufficient reason for that obscurity in the circumstances and situation of Ezekiel, who was a captive in the land of the Chaldeans; and who, having foretold the fall of Egypt by the Babylonians, (see chap. xxx. 24.) could not well predict the fall of the Babylonians themselves, otherwise than in dark and figurative terms.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, When God begins he will make an end; his enemies shall feel his vengeance and perish utterly.

1. He threatens the destruction of Gog and his army, and the desolation of his country. His soldiers, for whom he drained his kingdom, and left but a sixth part behind him, shall be disabled from hurting God's people, and fall upon the mountains of Israel, a prey to every beast and bird; and, while the king with his army miserably perishes there, the fire of God, some consuming judgment, shall devour his country; and even the isles of his dominion, which promised themselves security from their situation, shall be consumed together: for, when God riseth up to judgment, no place or person is privileged, or may hope for exemption. *Note;* (1.) The mightiest armies before God are as easily crushed as the moth. (2.) While the ambitious unjustly labour to usurp the rights of others, God justly punishes them with the loss of what was their own.

2. God will thus make himself known and glorious. His people will prove his power, faithfulness, and grace, signally manifested on their behalf, and be engaged thereby, renouncing all their former idolatries, to cleave to him alone: for nothing tends to separate the heart from sin so effectually as the right knowledge of God. And his enemies the heathen shall know him too by these examples of

his vengeance, shall fear to provoke his jealousy, nor dare any more to molest his people. *Note;* The judgments of God on others should be our warnings.

2dly, What God hath spoken as absolutely to be accomplished, is as sure as if it were already done. *It is done,* it is done: for faith realizes both as present.

By three things the dreadful destruction of the army of Gog is represented.

1. By the vast quantity of weapons of war which, among other spoil, should be collected, and furnish the people of Israel with fuel during seven years; and every chip that they burned would serve to remind them of God's mercy, and to awaken their gratitude.

2. By the length of time which it will take to bury the dead, and the numbers employed in the service. The whole house of Israel, assisted by the passengers, who would willingly labour to remove so great a nuisance, shall be no less than seven months employed in cleansing the land, and collecting the bodies to their burying-place, *the valley of the passengers, on the east of the sea,* of the sea of Gennezareth, which shall from this event receive a new name, and be called the valley of *Hamon-gec,* and the city near thereunto *Hamonah,* alluding to the multitudes there buried. *And it shall be a renown to Israel in that day, when God shall be glorified;* such an astonishing instance of the divine interposition in their favour shall make them respected, and their humanity to the dead redound greatly to their honour. And at the seven months' end, when the multitudes that fell together are covered in the earth, certain persons shall be appointed to go through the land, and bury the scattered corpses; whilst every traveller who passes by, when he sees a bone, shall set up a mark for the notice of the searchers appointed, until the land be thoroughly cleansed. *Note;* (1.) When our nostrils are offended with the putrefaction of a corpse, we should remember the sin which has made these bodies so vile. (2.) They who have experienced great national mercies, should unite in their labour to cleanse their land from every pollution of sin; and to this every lover of his country will gladly lend a helping hand. (3.) To advance God's glory is Israel's great renown.

3. There will be enough for every bird and beast to feed upon; and they are commanded to come and devour the slain, sacrificed to divine justice. Corpses enough there will be, not merely for a meal, but to fatten them; and this not only of the common soldiers, but of *the mighty,* and *the princes of the earth,* strewed around with *their horses and chariots,* fallen in one promiscuous ruin.

Thus God will make the heathen to see and observe his judgments against the enemies of his people, and will advance his own great glory thereby: while the house of Israel shall exult in his salvation, and receive fresh confirmation of God's care and love, engaging their confidence in him *from that day forward.* Let God's Israel then to the end of time trust in the Lord, yea, for ever: for he will never disappoint the expectations of them who place their whole confidence in him.

3dly, Much had the people of God suffered from the blasphemies

## C H A P. XL.

*The time, manner, and end of the vision. The description and admeasurement of the several gates. Eight tables. The chambers. The porch of the house.*

[Before Christ 574.]

**I**N the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the

blasphemies of their enemies, much under the heavy hand of God upon them in afflictions; but now he will deliver them out of all their troubles.

1. The heathen shall be silenced, and convinced of God's designs in the sufferings of his people. They thought the captivity of Israel was owing to their weakness, or the inability of their God to protect them; but by this amazing exertion of divine power on their behalf, they shall see that the only cause of their suffering was their sin, for which they were given into their enemies' hands; and that God dealt with them according to their transgressions, in all the evils that he brought upon them. So that what he did was with a view to his own glory, visiting their iniquity with a rod; yet, as by the event appeared, not suffering his truth to fail, nor wanting power to recover and restore them to their former splendour, when they had smarted sufficiently under his corrections.

2. God's faithful people shall know his designs of grace towards them, notwithstanding all that they have suffered. Jealous for his own honour, which the heathen had reproached, he will magnify himself in Israel's deliverance, since *they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses*, and testified unfeigned repentance for their provocations, aggravated by the mercies, peace, and comforts that they had enjoyed, *when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid*. Therefore he will now turn his hand, recover them from their dispersion, and bring them to their own land; and hereby God *will be sanctified in the sight of many nations, who will own his dispensations towards his Israel to have been righteous, just, and good*. And the faithful, while they acknowledge God's justice in their sufferings, shall experience his rich grace in their salvation, and know him to be *their God*, their covenant God, who will no more withdraw the light of his countenance from them as a nation, but will pour out his Spirit upon them in a most glorious manner. *Note*; (1.) True penitents are willing to bear their shame, and own their sufferings to be less than their iniquities deserve. (2.) When by divine grace we return to God, he will return to us, and lift up again upon us the light of his countenance.

## PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON CHAP. XL—XLVIII\*.

“VITRINGA has proved, in two volumes in Dutch, and a defence of them against the son of Cocceius, that this temple agrees with Solomon's, and with that

\* The reader is left to form his own judgment on the temple seen in vision by Ezekiel, from the various interpretations that I have given in the Preliminary Remarks, the Critical Notes, and the Reflections.

tenth *day* of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the self-same day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither.

2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which *was* as the frame of a city on the south.

“which was afterwards built by Zerobabel and Herod.” Secker.

“Men. Ben. Isr. de Resurrectione, lib. iii. c. 8. p. 314, &c. produces twenty-one instances to shew that this prophecy of Ezekiel was not fulfilled under the second temple; and therefore is yet to be fulfilled.” Secker.

“This is certainly not the temple of Zerobabel, nor the division of the land nor the governors that we find either from Zerobabel's time to the destruction of the Persian empire, or from Simon the Prince to the destruction of the Jewish kings of the Hasmonean race: nor the temple which Herod the Great began to build in the 18th year; much less is Herod the Prince mentioned in the 45th chapter. I am not therefore able to give an historical account of these chapters.” Michaelis.

“The temple described by Ezekiel should have been built by the new colonists; the customs and usages which he orders should have been observed by them; the division of the country should have been followed by them. That the temple did not arise out of its ruins according to his model, and that his orders were in no manner obeyed, was the fault of Israel. How far were they behind the orders of their first lawgiver Moses? what wonder therefore that they as little regard their second lawgiver Ezekiel? He supposes the return of all the tribes; which was agreeable to the prophecies of the other prophets, and to the will of Cyrus: but only Judah and Benjamin preferred the habitations of their ancestors to the country of Chaldea; and thus the great plan of Ezekiel was at once destroyed.” Eichhorn.

*A Dissertation on Ezekiel's Vision of the Temple, Ordinances of the Priest, Division of the Land, Flowing of Waters out of the Temple, &c. By Archbishop Secker.*

Ezek. chap. xl—xlvi.

THE Israelites mentioned in this vision are said to be the twelve tribes: Joseph is to have two shares of the land, and Levi none; but in the names of the gates Levi is mentioned, and but one named from Joseph. The country allotted them is described by geographical marks to be the land of Canaan. Indeed the shares of the several tribes are not the same, which they were in Joshua; nor is any of the country beyond Jordan divided amongst them. And chap. xlvi. 22, 23. orders, that the profelytes sojourning in each tribe shall have an inheritance in land with those of the tribe in which they sojourn. This doth not seem to have been practised before the captivity. For though the Kenites, Jud. i. 16. or rather part of them, 1 Sam. xv. 6. dwelt among the Jews, yet as they had neither house,

noy



3 And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in

his hand, and a measuring-reed; and he stood in the gate.

4 And the man said unto me, Son of man,

nor vineyard, nor field, but dwelt in tents, Jer. xxxv. 7—9. as did Abraham, who had not a foot of the land in possession, Acts, vii. 5. their case was not the same with that which is appointed here. But still in this alteration it appears, that the twelve tribes are meant literally, else there would be no distinction between them and the proselytes\*.

And surely the vision must relate to those Israelites who were to return in a short time from Babylon, not to those of a future age. It belonged to those who had been idolaters†, and practised their idolatrous worship in God's temple, so that only the wall was between him and idols: compare chap. viii.: and part of whose idolatries had been honouring the carcases of their kings, chap. xlii. 7—9. and if they repented, the pattern of the house was to be shewn them, ver. 11. which had been a small consolation, had it not been to be built for above two thousand years after. And as no other cause of God's anger against them is mentioned or hinted at but their idolatry, surely the vision must relate to their return from that captivity, before which they had been idolaters, not from one before which they had not ‡.

Besides, the temple to be built, or rather represented in this vision as built, is plainly the Jewish temple. Learned men, as Villalpandus and others, apprehend it to be of the same dimensions with Solomon's; and Vtringa is said to have proved it in a Dutch work to be of the same dimensions also with Zerobabel's and Herod's. And Lowth apprehends there might be probably need of so exact a description of it, as is given in this vision, in order to enable them to build one of the same dimensions. Moses had the dimensions of the tabernacle revealed to him, Exod. xxv. &c. and David of the temple, 1 Chron. xxviii. 11. 19. and no one after the captivity could be supposed to remember these. But there is a description of Solomon's temple, 1 Kings, vi. which we must suppose them to have had then, and which would be a great direction to

\* The meaning may possibly be, that the Gentile converts to Christianity shall have the same privileges with the Jewish. But supposing this, the twelve tribes must mean real Israelites: and they are considered as the principal inhabitants in this vision: whereas the Gentile proselytes to Christianity have greatly exceeded the Jewish. There is indeed a difficulty in the execution of this order, unless the several tribes in their captivity were kept distinct: for else how could it be determined amongst which of them the proselytes sojourned? But perhaps the meaning is, that where they sojourned after the return, and before the division of the land, there they should have a share. It is foretold, Zech. ii. 11. that Zion should have many proselytes, at the return from Babylon; for that time appears by ver. 6, 7. to be meant.

† They and their kings, chap. xlii. 7.

‡ It should also be observed, that as a person, with a line of flax in his hands, measures here the city as well as the temple, so Zech. ii. 1, 2. a person appears with a measuring line in his hand going to measure Jerusalem, the length and breadth of it; and this was when Zion, that dwelt with the daughter of Babylon, was commanded to flee from the land of the north; ver. 6, 7.

them, though not so particular as Ezekiel's§. Zerobabel's temple was indeed much inferior to Solomon's, Hag. ii. 3. but this might be in ornaments, not things essential. The old people wept when the foundations of it were laid, Ezr. iii. 12. but this might be joy or tenderness, not sorrow at its being of less dimensions, and indeed Solomon's was not very large¶.

The glory of the Lord had been seen by Ezekiel leaving the first house, chap. x. 19. and going to a mountain on the east (as it must naturally do, when it went out of the house, because the entrance of it was from the east), and standing there, chap. xi. 23. And from the east it returned to this temple in the vision, and filled the house, chap. xliii. 1—5. xlii. 4. Now the glory of the Lord entered into Solomon's temple at the dedication of it, so that the priest could not enter into it to minister, 1 Kings, viii. 10, 11. 2 Chron. v. 13, 14. This was before Solomon's prayer. And again after this prayer fire came down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifice, and the glory filled the house so that the priests could not enter, 2 Chron. vii. 1, 2. One supposes therefore, that it was not always in the same degree. But after this I know not that we have any mention of it in the historical books, though there is a vision of it, Isai. vi. Nor, I think, doth Josephus say any thing of it afterwards, though he doth say, Antiq. iii. 8, 9. that the prophetic shining of the breast-plate and stone of the high-priest's right shoulder left off two hundred years before his time: τὸ θεῖον δὲ διαχέρας νότος ἐπὶ τῆ παραστάσει τῶν νόμων. We are not surely to think, that the glory of the Lord stayed till the return from the captivity, much less stays till a future return, on any hill to the east of Jerusalem; nor indeed is it said, but only that it went to a hill in the east, and returned by the way of the east. But are we to suppose that it did, or will literally return at all to the temple there described? It is said here that it did, but it is said in a vision\*\*. And neither Ezra, who gives the history of the building of the temple, nor Nehemiah, nor the prophets, who wrote afterwards, nor

§ And it is not easy to conceive, why directions so minute as his should be given, but in order to a real literal building; for surely no certain allegorical sense can be given of each: and to make them all only as ornaments of a parable is loading it with ornaments beyond measure.

¶ Some make the measures of Ezekiel's temple and other things foretold so large, that the meaning cannot be literal; but I have not yet seen sufficient authority for this. Or if the measures were much larger than Solomon's temple, or than it was possible the temple, &c. should be, it might mean, not that no literal temple was intended, but that it should be a very large and spacious one, as certain numbers are put for uncertain, and hyperbolical ones for real ones, as in the burning the weapons of Gog's army, and burying their carcases.

¶ I think it is not mentioned from the entering into Canaan till now.

\*\* Which perhaps may mean only, that God will as certainly direct and protect his people as if he was visibly present by a symbol amongst them.

Josephus,



declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.

5 And behold, a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring-reed of six cubits long by the cubit and an hand-breadth: so he measured the

and xxxix. 25, &c. And accordingly in this vision it is said, chap. xliii. 7.\* that the temple here described was the place of God's throne, where he would dwell for ever in the midst of the children of Israel, and his holy name should neither they nor their kings defile any more by their idolatries. This must relate to their return from a captivity, into which they had been sent for idolatry. And in order to preserve the truth of the prophecy, the words *for ever* and *no more* must be explained, as they must in several other places for the same purpose. But supposing them to be understood of a long time only, they will preclude any plea, that the things here foretold were to have been fulfilled if the Jews had been pious; but were not, they being otherwise.

Some object against understanding the description of the temple, &c. literally, that the waters said to flow from the temple, and the increase of them, and their sweetening the Dead Sea, and the trees upon their banks with leaves for medicine, chap. xlvii. 1—12. cannot be so understood, and direct the rest not to be so understood. But there was some liberal foundation for this also. For there was much water conveyed in pipes to the temple for washing the place and the sacrifices and the priests, as Aristeus affirms, whose book must have been written whilst the temple stood, and Lightfoot from the Rabbins, and the nature of the things shews. And if I understand Lowth right, they ran out at the east end of the temple, and these several pipes uniting their streams with one another, and with the water of Siloam, and Kidron, and others, which were formerly more plentiful about Jerusalem, than in later times, and with waters from cisterns, see Reland, p. 294. 299, 300. 303. 856—860. might in a short space grow deep and considerable, and might also have trees on their banks, though I find no mention of any, and though Reland, p. 295. mentions a place where Kidron had none. What virtues the leaves of these trees might have I know not. But I see not why Grotius should think these waters must be those of the fountain Callirhoe: for that being a medicinal water, as Josephus and Pliny say it was, see Reland, p. 302, 303. hath no connexion with the medicinal virtue of the trees on its banks. And though Solinus in Grotius says, it was Hierosolymis proxima, [near to Jerusalem] yet that proximity might be at some miles distance, and these waters were at a town which took its name of Callirhoe from them, and was near the Dead Sea: Reland, p. 302, 678. Grotius also understands the healing of the waters to mean only, that this river shall pass through the Dead Sea, without being hurt by it, as the Rhone through the Lemane Lake and others. But no river passes through the Dead Sea, but all are lost in it. And though perhaps a larger quantity running in might make fish live in it; yet neither hath this ever literally happened, nor doth it appear to what very great purpose it would serve. Can it be intended then only as an hyperbolic expression, that in some time then future, Jerusalem

should have a more plentiful supply of water †, or in general, that it should have every thing they could wish ‡? Isaiah, xli. 17—20, promises the Jews plenty of water in the wilderness, where there was none before, and that a variety of trees should grow there; and chap. xliii. 19, 20. that they should be for his people to drink, and that the beasts, dragons, and owls, should honour him for them. And from chap. xxxv. 6—10. and xlvi. 20, 21. one should think this was to be at the journey from Babylon, in which if any miracles of this kind had been literally performed, surely the book of Ezra, or Nehemiah, would have mentioned them. But Isaiah, xlv. 1—5. rather directs to understand these promises of God's spirit, which should extend to the fiercest of the Gentiles, as well as be abundantly poured on the Jews; and to these waters every one that is thirsty is invited, Isaiah, lv. 1. and shall draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation, Isaiah, xii. 3. and God feeds his sheep by the waters of rest, Psalm, xxiii. And this seems the most natural interpretation of what is said here, and Joel, iii. 18. that a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and water the valley of Shittim, which was near the Dead Sea; and Zech. xiv. 8. that living waters should flow from Jerusalem, half to the eastern, half to the west sea. Indeed commentators mention some springs at Jerusalem that flowed literally some to the one, some to the other; but I know not on what authority. And were it literally true, it would still seem also a figure of what ver. 9. expresses, "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth;" and which Isaiah, ii. 3. and Micah, iv. 2. express in terms nearer akin to this figure: "The Lord shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem §." And the conversion of Gentiles is foretold in the Old Testament under the figure of taming wild beasts, and may be well understood here in Ezekiel, by healing the waters of the Dead Sea, of which yet some places would not be healed ¶. But still this doth

† Which might be by the repairing of the aqueducts, of which as Solomon and Hezekiah took care, so did afterwards Nehemiah and Simon. See Notes on Zech. xiv. 8. in Pool.

‡ As indeed a promise of streams of water in uncommon places seems, Isaiah, xxx. 25. to mean plenty of good and happiness.

§ Conformably to which Ezekiel, chap. xlvii. 9. mentions two rivers, though before and after only one is mentioned. But see Hebr. Bib.

¶ And Isaiah, chap. xi. 9. brings it nearer still, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." And it hath been already observed here, that Zechariah foretels, there should be many proselytes after the return from Babylon.

¶ If the waters mentioned in the above place of Zech. xiv. 8. be the same with the fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. this would turn one's thoughts to water for washing, not drinking, that is to say, to expiation, not instruction. But the fountain, Zech. xiii. 1. seems rather parallel to the clean water sprinkled, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. for the water of sprinkling was for חַטָּאת *chatath* and נִדְבָב *niddab*, Numb. xix. 9, 13. which are the very words used Zech. xiii. 1.

\* On the house being filled with the glory of the Lord.

breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed.

6 ¶ Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the stairs

not prove, that the rest of the prophesy is not to be understood literally, any more than that the return from the captivity is not to be understood so. Nor doth any thing determine this increafe of religious knowledge and practice to Christianity. Yet the mention of fishers favours it, as the apostles were some of them such, and Christ tells them, they should be fishers of men. But on the other hand this makes a confusion of figures: first, to make the waters a symbol of religious knowledge and divine grace, then instantly to represent the conversion of men, by pulling them out of these waters in which alone they can live: whereas considering it only as an ornament consequential to the waters being made wholesome, this difficulty is avoided.

Some indeed have understood ver. 8. that these waters were to flow through Galilee; and so to translate it, and so Ch. Syr. may be understood. Whether the word may not also be an appellative in them I know not. But if it be Galilee, it must be also eastern Galilee, and no such country is named elsewhere\*. Besides, no waters from Jerusalem could flow through Galilee; but they did flow through the east country, to the Dead Sea, which is called the East Sea, ver. 18. and these very waters are said to flow that way in Joel, and part of them to flow that way in Ezekiel. And the word must in some places of Scripture signify something different from Galilee, and probably signifies a country, or boundary. Nor doth the New Testament, or any old Christian writer, so far as I can learn, apply this text to Christ's preaching. Still, without question, Christianity had spread true religion vastly more than Judaism did; and therefore this part of the prophesy is more applicable to Christianity. And as these waters flowed out after the temple was built, and it is not said how long after, or how long they were coming to be so great a stream; the building of the temple, and the rules about worship, and about the prince, may be literal, and belong to Judaism, and this of the waters be figurative, and belong to Christianity. But then † the division of the land cannot well be both literal and true; for few of the twelve tribes returned, and we have no ground to think any such division was made to those that did; nor yet did their sins hinder these things; for, as was mentioned above, it is in this vision foretold they should not sin ‡.

\* Upper and lower are: but one lay just south of the other.

† The city and temple were not built according to these directions; for they were not separate from one another as chap. xlv. chap. xlviii. require them, and accordingly Rev. xxi. 22. says there was no temple in the city, but gives another reason; nor were there such portions assigned, so far as appears, to people, prince, or priests at Jerusalem.

‡ And probably for some time after their return from captivity they sinned less than ever they had done in the same time before.

One should not think Ezekiel had respect to the tree of life, in what he says of the trees on the bank of this river; for though indeed in Hebrew *tree* may be used for such trees, yet Gen. ii. 9. placing the tree of life in the midst of the garden intimates there was but one, whereas in Ezekiel there are many trees, and it should seem of several sorts: yet Rev. xxii. 2. plainly referring to this place calls the tree [for he says *ξύλον*, though he must mean in the plural] *ξύλων ζῳνῆς* [the tree of life].

## C H A P. XL.

Ver. 1. *The hand of the Lord was upon me*] The temple here described by Ezekiel is, in all probability, the same which he saw before his captivity, and which had been burned by the Chaldeans fourteen years before this vision. On comparing the books of Kings and Chronicles with this prophet, we shall find the same dimensions in the parts described by both; for instance, the temple, or place which comprehended the sanctuary, the holy place, and the vestibule or porch before the temple, are found to measure equally both in Ezekiel and the Kings. Compare 1 Kings, vi. 3, 4—16. and chap. xli. 2, &c. The inside ornaments of the temple are intirely the same: in both we see two courts; an inner one for the priests, and an outer one for the people. Compare 1 Kings, vi. 29, 36. 2 Chron. iv. 9. and Ezek. xli. 16, 17. and viii. 7, 16. So that there is room to suppose, that, in all the rest, the temple of Ezekiel resembled the old one; and that God's design in retracing these ideas in the prophet's memory, was to preserve the remembrance of the plan, the dimensions, the ornaments, and whole structure of this divine edifice; that, at the return from captivity, the people might more easily rebuild it, agreeably to this model. The prophet's applying himself to describe this edifice, was a motive of hope to the Jews, of seeing themselves one day delivered from captivity, the temple rebuilt, and their nation restored to its ancient inheritance. Ezekiel touches very slightly upon the description of the temple, or house of the Lord, which comprehended the holy place and sanctuary, and which are so correctly described in the books of Kings. He dwells more largely upon the gates, the galleries and apartments of the temple, concerning which the history of the Kings had not spoken, or only just taken notice of by the way. This vision of the prophet happened in the year of the world 3430, on Tuesday the 30th of April, fourteen years after the taking of Jerusalem. See Calmet, Usher's Annal. A. M. 3430. and the note on chap. xlviii. 35.

Ver. 2. *Set me upon a very high mountain*] The expression points out mount Moriah, whereon the temple was built. It is here called a *very high mountain*, because it represents the seat of the Christian church foretold by the prophets, that *it should be established upon the top of the mountains*. We are to remember that all this passed in vision. Houbigant renders the last clause of this verse, *In which there were on the opposite side as the buildings of a city*.

Ver. 3. *A man, &c.*] That is, an angel deputed from God to give him the dimensions of the temple. See chap. i. 7. and xliii. 6. The Hebrew *cubit* was equal to about eighteen inches of our measure. The reader will best understand this description, by referring to Calmet's plan of it in his Dictionary of the Bible.

Ver. 4. *Set thine heart upon*] *Mark well, or fix thy attention upon, &c.*

Ver. 5. *By the cubit, and an hand-breadth*] Each cubit containing a cubit and an hand-breadth, called the great cubit, chap. xli. 8. and supposed equal to half a yard. According to Michaelis, the Hebrew measures are: 1. The finger's breadth. 2. Four fingers, or hand-breadth. 3. Ell;

thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, *which was* one reed broad; and the other threshold *of the gate which was* one reed broad.

7 And *every* little chamber *was* one reed long, and one reed broad; and between the little chambers *were* five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate within *was* one reed.

8 He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed.

9 Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and the posts thereof, two cubits; and the porch of the gate *was* inward.

10 And the little chambers of the gate eastward *were* three on this side, and three on that side; they three *were* of one measure: and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side.

11 And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate, ten cubits; *and* the length of the gate, thirteen cubits.

12 The space also before the little chambers *was* one cubit *on this side*, and the space *was* one cubit on that side: and the little chambers *were* six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side.

13 He measured then the gate from the roof of *one* little chamber to the roof of another: the breadth *was* five and twenty cubits, door against door.

14 He made also posts of threescore cubits, even unto the post of the court round about the gate.

15 And from the face of the gate of the entrance unto the face of the porch of the inner gate *were* fifty cubits.

16 And *there were* narrow windows to the little chambers, and to their posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches: and windows *were* round about inward: and upon *each* post *were* palm-trees.

17 Then brought he me into the outward court, and, lo, *there were* chambers, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty chambers *were* upon the pavement.

18 And the pavement by the side of the gates over against the length of the gates *was* the lower pavement.

19 Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate unto the forefront of the inner court without, an hundred cubits eastward and northward.

20 ¶ And the gate of the outward court that looked toward the north, he measured the length thereof, and the breadth thereof.

21 And the little chambers thereof *were* three on this side and three on that side; and the posts thereof and the arches thereof were after the measure of the first gate: the length thereof *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits.

22 And their windows, and their arches, and their palm-trees, *were* after the measure of the gate that looketh toward the east; and they went up unto it by seven steps; and the arches thereof *were* before them.

23 And the gate of the inner court *was*

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the smaller of five hand-breadths, the larger of six. 4. Rod, of six ells. He also allows the Rabbinical account, that a finger is equal to the length of six barley grains. See chap. xliii. 13.

*Of the building*] Of the outer wall, which was three yards high and three yards broad. This wall surrounded a part which corresponded to the court of the Gentiles, and served as a security against the precipices of the mount on which the temple stood.

*Ver. 6. Stairs*] *Steps.*

*Ver. 11. The length of the gate*] *The length of the entry of the gate.*

*Ver. 12. The space*] *The border.*

*Ver. 14. Of threescore cubits, &c.*] *Of twenty cubits [LXX], and at the posts of the courts were gates [or arched passages] round about.* The meaning is, that the angel described, or made a delineation of the height of the columns or pillars

which were to support the stories or rooms over the arched gate.

*Ver. 18. And the pavement*] *And the pavement abutted upon the sides of the gates, over-against the length of the gates of the pavement below.*

*Ver. 19, 20. An hundred cubits, &c.*] *An hundred cubits eastward.* *Ver. 20. And he brought me northward; and there was a gate in the outward court, which looked towards the north, &c.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 21. Arches*] *Or Porch.* So wherever it occurs throughout this chapter.

*Ver. 22. And their windows*] *And the windows thereof, and the porch, and the palm-trees thereof:* and so the last clause, *And the porch thereof suitable thereto.*

*Ver. 23. And the gate, &c.*] *And there was a gate to the inner court, over-against this gate of the north, as [in the gates] toward the east, &c.*

*Ver.*

over against the gate toward the north, and toward the east; and he measured from gate to gate, an hundred cubits.

24 ¶ After that he brought me toward the south, and behold, a gate toward the south: and he measured the posts thereof and the arches thereof according to these measures.

25 And *there were* windows in it and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows: the length *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits.

26 And *there were* seven steps to go up to it, and the arches thereof *were* before them: and it had palm-trees, one on this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof.

27 ¶ And *there was* a gate in the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south, an hundred cubits.

28 And he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gate according to these measures;

29 And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and *there were* windows in it and in the arches thereof round about: *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad.

30 And the arches round about *were* five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad.

31 And the arches thereof *were* toward the outer court; and palm-trees *were* upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it *had* eight steps.

32 ¶ And he brought me into the inner court toward the east: and he measured the gate according to these measures.

33 And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, *were* according to these measures: and *there were* windows therein, and in the arches thereof round about: *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad.

34 And the arches thereof *were* toward the outward court; and palm-trees *were* upon the

posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it *had* eight steps.

35 ¶ And he brought me to the north gate, and measured *it* according to these measures;

36 The little chambers thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, and the windows to it round about: the length *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits.

37 And the posts thereof *were* toward the outer court; and palm-trees *were* upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it *had* eight steps.

38 And the chambers and the entries thereof *were* by the posts of the gates, where they washed the burnt-offering.

39 ¶ And in the porch of the gate *were* two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to slay thereon the burnt-offering and the sin-offering and the trespass-offering.

40 And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north gate, *were* two tables; and on the other side, which *was* at the porch of the gate, *were* two tables.

41 Four tables *were* on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, whereupon they slew *their sacrifices*.

42 And the four tables *were* of hewn stone for the burnt-offering, of a cubit and an half long, and a cubit and an half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt-offering and the sacrifice.

43 And within *were* hooks, an hand-broad, fastened round about: and upon the tables *was* the flesh of the offering.

44 ¶ And without the inner gate *were* the chambers of the fingers in the inner court, which *was* at the side of the north gate; and their prospect *was* toward the south: one at the side of the east gate *having* the prospect toward the north.

45 And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect *is* toward the south, *is* for

Ver. 24. According to these measures] According to the same measure: that is to say, the same which had been used in the eastern court. See Wall's Critical Notes, and Houbigant.

Ver. 44. And without the inner gate, &c.] And he brought me to the inner gate, where there were two chambers in the inner court; one at the northern side of the gate, which looked to the

the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house.

46 And the chamber whose prospect *is* toward the north *is* for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these *are* the sons of Zadok among the sons of Levi, which come near to the LORD to minister unto him.

47 So he measured the court, an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad, four-square; and the altar *that was* before the house.

48 ¶ And he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured *each* post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate *was* three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side.

49 The length of the porch *was* twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits; and *he brought me* by the steps whereby they went up to it: and *there were* pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side.

*the south; the other at the southern side of the gate, which looked to the north.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 46. These are the sons of Zadok*] The high priesthood belonged to the eldest sons of the house of Aaron; so that the office originally appertained to the family of Zadok; though that of Ithamar exercised it for some time; from *Eli*, who was high-priest in the time of Samuel, to *Abiathar*, whom Solomon dispossessed, and restored the high priesthood to the former line by placing Zadok in his room. The family of Zadok alone is mentioned in this vision, probably because they continued attached to the worship of the true God, when the priests of Ithamar's line forsook it, and fell into idolatry. See chap. xliii. 19. xlv. 15. xlviii. 11.

*Ver. 49. There were pillars*] Hereby seem to be meant the two great pillars of brass, whereof we have the dimensions and a description in the first book of Kings, chap. vii. 15, &c. and 2 Chron. iii. 15.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The date of this prophesy is in the twenty-fifth year of the captivity of Jeconiah, in the tenth day of the beginning of the year, which was reckoned in two different ways: the civil year began at the autumnal equinox, and then this tenth day must have been the great day of atonement: the ecclesiastical year commenced from the vernal equinox, and then this day falls on the tenth of Nisan, answering to part of our March and April, when the paschal lamb was separated from the flock, in order to be slain on the fourteenth.

The scene is laid in the land of Judæa; and in vision the prophet is set on a very high mountain; and there was, as it were, *the frame of a city*, full in his view. There appeared to him in the gate, a glorious personage, an angel deputed from God, or, as many suppose, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the maker and builder of this city of God, his church\*. His figure was bright and glistening as burnished brass, and in his hand he bore a measuring reed and line; and, addressing the prophet, bid him carefully behold, attentively hear, with fixed thoughtfulness weigh, and with fidelity deliver to the house of Israel, what was about to be revealed to him. *Note;* (1.) The ministers of God must themselves carefully read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the word of truth, that they may be enabled truly to declare

\* See the Note prefixed to the Preliminary Remarks on this vision.

it to others. (2.) We must be ourselves divinely taught by the Lord Jesus, before we can possibly teach others.

2dly, The measuring reed in the hand of the glorious Person before mentioned, was six cubits long, exceeding the common cubit by a hand's breadth.

The outer wall is first measured, three yards and a half high, and of the same breadth. The church is a sacred inclosure, and safely protected by the power and love of him, who is as a wall of fire round about his people.

In this wall were three gates, at the east, the north, and south; typical, it may be, of Jesus the way to God, no man coming to the Father but by him. The ascent to the gates was by seven steps; intimating, that when we go to the temple, we should lift up our hearts to God. The *little chambers* adjoining to the gate, should teach all true worshippers, especially ministers, to seek no great things here below; and they were many, for in our Father's house are many mansions. Each chamber had windows, for all believers enjoy the light of the divine word: the windows were *narrow*, the measure of our knowledge here below being at the best imperfect. The different *courts* may intimate the different estates of God's people, some of whom maintain more intimate communion with him than others. The *posts*, with palm-trees engraven on them, represent the strength and flourishing condition of the saints of God, never overwhelmed by the heaviest afflictions, and triumphing over all their foes. The *glistening pavement* may teach us where all the glories of this present world should be put, even under our feet.

3dly, *The inner court* here described appears exactly similar to the outer; for though some Christians are much more advanced than others, yet all bear the same image of Christ, differing only as brethren of several statures. By *eight steps* was the ascent into this court; the nearer we approach to God, the more shall we be raised above the world, and the things of it.

4thly, We have notice taken,

1. Of the tables, to slay and prepare the sacrifices for the altar. Before we draw near to God, we should prepare our offering, and not be rash with our lips, to utter any thing before God.

2. The chambers; some for the singers, others for the priests, who had the care of the house and the altar. They who serve at the temple, deserve a provision there.

3. The altar in the inner court represents the Lord Jesus; and as it stood in the centre against the three gates,

all



## C H A P. XLI.

*The measures, parts, chambers, and ornaments of the temple.*

[Before Christ 574.]

**A**FTERWARD he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, *which was* the breadth of the tabernacle.

2 And the breadth of the door *was* ten cubits; and the sides of the door *were* five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side: and he measured the length thereof, forty cubits: and the breadth, twenty cubits.

3 Then went he inward, and measured the post of the door, two cubits; and the door, six cubits; and the breadth of the door, seven cubits.

4 So he measured the length thereof, twenty cubits; and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple: and he said unto me, *This is* the most holy place.

5 After he measured the wall of the house, six cubits; and the breadth of *every* side-chamber, four cubits, round about the house on every side.

6 And the side-chambers *were* three, one over another, and thirty in order; and they

entered into the wall which *was* of the house for the side-chambers round about, that they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house.

7 And *there was* an enlarging, and a winding about still upward to the side-chambers: for the winding-about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house *was still* upward, and so increased *from* the lowest chamber to the highest by the midst.

8 I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side-chambers *were* a full reed of six great cubits.

9 The thickness of the wall, which *was* for the side-chamber without, *was* five cubits: and *that* which *was* left *was* the place of the side-chambers that *were* within.

10 And between the chambers *was* the wideness of twenty cubits round about the house on every side.

11 And the doors of the side-chambers *were* toward *the place that was* left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south: and the breadth of the place that was left *was* five cubits round about.

12 Now the building that *was* before the separate place at the end toward the west *was*

all the worshippers in the most distant court could look to it: for him, in all our worship, we must ever keep in view, by whom alone we have access unto God.

4. Before the temple was a porch, with pillars, probably like *Jachin* and *Boaz*, intimating the stability and beauty of the Gospel church.

## C H A P. XLI.

*Ver. 1. He brought me to the temple*] After having described the courts and the porch, the prophet enters into the temple, properly so called, whereof he gives the dimensions and description.

*Ver. 3. Then went he inward, &c.*] There is scarcely any understanding this without the LXX. It is a description of the partition-wall and door between the Holy and the Holy of Holies, which, according to the LXX, was twenty cubits long, that is to say, *the ail of the door* (which must mean the thickness of the posts, or ends of the wall, to which the door was hung) *two cubits*; and *the door six cubits* (broad), and *the shoulders, or sides of the door* (that is to say, the spaces of wall on each side of the door,) *were seven cubits on one side, and seven cubits on the other*. Now these fourteen, with the six of the breadth of the door, do

make *twenty*, which was the breadth of the house. See Wall's Critical Notes on the place.

*Ver. 6. And they entered into the wall*] At five cubits' height from the ground, the wall, or the buttresses which supported the outward chambers, abated of their thickness one cubit, and there was a rest or ledge of one cubit in breadth, on which the end of the rafters of each story was fastened; for they *had not hold in the wall of the house*. They were not fastened into the main wall of the house, but rested on the outside of the wall, where it grew narrower. See Lowth, and Houbigant's note on this and the following verse.

*Ver. 9. And that which was left, &c.*] *As much space, as there was between the side chambers adjacent to the temple*. Houbigant.

*Ver. 12. Now the building, &c.*] The word בנין *binian*, translated *building*, signifies a *wall* or *inclosure*, which ran along the outside of the priests' court, commensurate with the breadth of the western side of the temple, which was seventy cubits from north to south; and extended in length from east to west ninety cubits; ten cubits shorter than the whole area itself, and inclosing a void space of five cubits breadth, which lay between the side chambers

seventy cubits broad; and the wall of the building *was* five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits.

13 So he measured the house, an hundred cubits long; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, an hundred cubits long;

14 Also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, an hundred cubits.

15 And he measured the length of the building over against the separate place which *was* behind it, and the galleries thereof on the one side and on the other side, an hundred cubits, with the inner temple, and the porches of the court;

16 The door-posts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, ceiled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows *were* covered;

17 To that above the door, even unto the inner house, and without, and by all the wall round about within and without, by measure.

18 And *it was* made with cherubims and palm-trees, so that a palm-tree *was* between a cherub and a cherub; and *every* cherub had two faces;

19 So that the face of a man *was* toward

the palm-tree on the one side; and the face of a young lion toward the palm-tree on the other side: *it was* made through all the house round about.

20 From the ground unto above the door *were* cherubims and palm-trees made, and *on* the wall of the temple.

21 The posts of the temple *were* squared, and the face of the sanctuary; the appearance *of the one* as the appearance *of the other*.

22 The altar of wood *was* three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, *were* of wood: and he said unto me, This *is* the table that *is* before the LORD.

23 And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors.

24 And the doors had two leaves *apiece*, two turning leaves; two *leaves* for the one door, and two leaves for the other *door*.

25 And *there were* made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubims and palm-trees, like as *were* made upon the walls; and *there were* thick planks upon the face of the porch without.

26 And *there were* narrow windows and palm-trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the porch, and upon the side-chambers of the house, and thick planks.

bers and the inclosure; which area and void space may be understood by the *separate place* in this verse, and the *place which was left*, or the intermediate place, ver. 11. Houbigant renders the beginning of the present verse, *And the edifice which was in the front of the separate area, to the western side, was, &c.* See Lowth, and Lamy's *Apparatus Biblicus*.

Ver. 14. *Also the breadth of the face of the house*] The breadth of the front of the temple, and of the separate area, &c. The whole front of the temple eastward was a hundred cubits; which some expositors compute thus. The breadth of the temple twenty cubits; the thickness of the outward walls twelve cubits; the side chambers eight cubits; the walls of those chambers five cubits on each side; the breadth of the void space five cubits on each side; and the twenty cubits round about the house. See Lowth and Lamy.

Ver. 22. *The altar of wood*] The altar which was of wood, was three cubits high, two cubits long, and two broad; and it had horns; the bases and sides of it were wood. See the LXX and Houbigant.

Ver. 26. *And thick planks*] And upon the thick planks. Houbigant. That is to say, palm-trees, &c. were carved upon them.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet is at last brought to the temple; for they who faithfully and perseveringly commit themselves to the divine guidance shall be brought to his eternal presence in the better temple above.

The door was vastly wide; the gospel opening a great door, and effectual to the faithful.

The chambers in the sides of the temple increased a cubit in breadth each story, which was taken out of the thickness of the wall. The higher we build for glory, the more enlarged will our hearts be with faith, and love, and heavenly-mindedness.

2dly, The temple itself was adorned with cherubims and palm-trees, alternately: but being carved on the wall, only two of the cherubs' faces appeared. Every priest who looked thereon might learn what his duty required of him, to join the wisdom of the man to the courage of the lion; and he stood between two palm-trees, the ensigns

## C H A P. XLII.

*The chambers for the priests. The use thereof. The measures of the outward court.*

[Before Christ 574.]

**T**HEN he brought me forth into the utter court, the way toward the north: and he brought me into the chamber that *was* over against the separate place, and which *was* before the building toward the north.

2 Before the length of an hundred cubits *was* the north door, and the breadth *was* fifty cubits.

3 Over against the twenty cubits which *were* for the inner court, and over against the pavement which *was* for the utter court, *was* gallery against gallery in three stories.

4 And before the chambers *was* a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a way of one cubit; and their doors toward the north.

5 Now the upper chambers *were* shorter: for the galleries were higher than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building.

6 For they *were* in three stories, but had not pillars as the pillars of the courts: therefore *the building* was straitened more than the lowest, and the middlemost from the ground.

7 And the wall that *was* without over against the chambers, toward the utter court

on the forepart of the chambers, the length thereof *was* fifty cubits.

8 For the length of the chambers that *were* in the utter court *was* fifty cubits: and, lo, before the temple *were* an hundred cubits.

9 And from under these chambers *was* the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the utter court.

10 The chambers *were* in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building.

11 And the way before them *was* like the appearance of the chambers which *were* toward the north, as long as they, and as broad as they: and all their goings-out *were* both according to their fashions, and according to their doors.

12 And according to the doors of the chambers that *were* toward the south *was* a door in the head of the way, *even* the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them.

13 ¶ Then said he unto me, The north chambers and the south chambers, which *are* before the separate place, they *be* holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the LORD shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering; for the place *is* holy.

of triumph, assured of victory over the powers of wickedness;—the character of every faithful minister of the gospel.

The altar here was of wood; and no mention is made of the gold wherewith it was overlaid in the other temples: perhaps to intimate, that no more material fire or incense would be made use of, but the more grateful fire of love, and incense of prayer and praise. And it is called a table, the great sacrifice being once offered, we have only now to feast thereupon, and eat that flesh and drink that blood which give immortal life to the soul.

## C H A P. XLII.

*Ver. 1. Into the utter court*] That is, to the outer part of the court, which court was the inner, or court of the priests, as appears from what follows.

*Ver. 2. Before the length, &c.*] This north door faced one of the cloisters, whose length was a hundred cubits, and its breadth fifty, which was the proportion of all the cloisters. See Lowth and Houbigant.

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*Ver. 4. And before the chambers*] Before the chambers was a walk ten cubits broad in the inner part, and one hundred cubits long; but the gates were to the north. Houbigant.

*Ver. 6. For they were in three stories*] The two upper stories had balconies projecting from them, the breadth of which was taken out of the rooms themselves, which rendered them so much the narrower, because the weight of the balconies was not supported by pillars, as the rooms over the cloisters of the inner court were, but only by the wall. See Houbigant's note.

*Ver. 8. For the length, &c.*] For the length of the chambers of the outer court was fifty cubits opposite to it; the whole was a hundred cubits.

*Ver. 9, 10. And from under these chambers*] Under these chambers was the entrance to the east, so that they might be entered from the outer court. *Ver. 10. Through the midst of the court, on the eastern side, over against the separate area, and over against the building of the chambers.* Houbigant.

3 A

Ver.

14 When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy *place* into the utter court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister;—for they *are* holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to *those things* which *are* for the people.

15 ¶ Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about.

16 He measured the east side with the measuring-reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about.

17 He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about.

18 He measured the south side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed.

19 He turned about to the west side, *and*

measured five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed.

20 He measured it by the four sides: it had a wall round about, five hundred *reeds* long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.

### C H A P. XLIII.

*The returning of the glory of God into the temple. The sin of Israel had hindered God's presence. The prophet exhorteth them to repentance, and observation of the law of the house. The measures, and the ordinances of the altar.*

[Before Christ 574.]

**A**FTERWARD he brought me to the gate, *even* the gate that looketh toward the east:

2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice *was* like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.

*Ver. 14. There they shall lay their garments*] “They shall not go into the court of the temple in their vestments, but shall lay them up in some of these chambers.” The priestly garments were only to be used in the time of their ministration. See Exod. xxxix. 41. Ezek. xlv. 17, &c. Calmet and Lowth.

*Ver. 16. Reeds*] *Cubits*, and so throughout the chapter. The LXX, Capellus, and others.

*Ver. 20. Between the sanctuary and the profane place*] Between the place which was consecrated to the Lord, and where it was not permitted either to the heathens, strangers, or impure persons, to present themselves; and that which all the world might enter indiscriminately; men, women, pure, impure, Gentiles and others. Josephus tells us, that such a place of separation existed in the temple in his time. See his Antiq. lib. xv. chap. 14. and Calmet.

The vision in chap. xl. xli. xlii. says Archbishop Newcombe, seems designed to shew that, if the Jews repented of their iniquities and idolatries, their temple should be rebuilt, and their worship according to the Levitical law should be restored. The buildings might at first be erected after the general plan here described, without deviation from it, though without ability to execute every part; and the whole might afterwards resemble it in many respects, though never exactly. However, the Jews should have proceeded conformably to the directions here given.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The chambers about the temple: probably designed for the retirement of the holy worshippers, where they might be alone for prayer and meditation: they who

would find comfort in public ordinances must maintain communion with God in private. The chambers were many; for in the heavenly temple there are many mansions. They had galleries before them, where they who lodged there might meet and converse together about the things of God; the great privilege, duty, and delight of God's people.

2. These chambers, many of them at least, were appropriated to the use of the priests, and were the places where they deposited the holy things, and their sacred vestments. They who have the charge of the sanctuary must reside upon the spot; and God has made a provision for them, that they may wait on him without distraction.

2dly, The ground on which this temple and its courts stood, was many miles in circumference; intimating the vast extent of the church of Christ in the times of the gospel, and particularly when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in. A wall of separation divided the sanctuary from the profane place, to signify the present exclusion of all those from the blessings and benefits of Christ's church and kingdom, who continue unhumiliated in their sins; and to prefigure the eternal separation of the world that lieth in wickedness,—of all those who continue impenitent,—from the presence of God in glory.

### C H A P. XLIII.

*Ver. 2. The glory of the God of Israel*] The Lord appeared upon his chariot borne by the cherubim, in the same manner as we have seen described in the first, eighth, and ninth chapters. The glory of the Lord, when it forsook the temple, is described as departing from the eastern gate of it; afterwards it is represented as quite forsaking

3 And *it was* according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, *even* according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions *were* like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face.

4 And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect *is* toward the east.

5 So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.

6 And I heard *him* speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me.

7 ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever; and my holy name shall the house of Israel no more defile, *neither* they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places.

8 In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the

wall between me and them, they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger.

9 Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcases of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever.

10 ¶ Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern.

11 And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings-out thereof, and the comings-in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write *it* in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.

12 This *is* the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof

the city, and removing to a mountain on the east side of it; and now it returns by the same way it departed. See chap. x. 11. and Calmet.

Ver. 3. *When I came to destroy, &c.] When he came, &c.* Houbigant, and Vulgate. The Chaldee paraphrases it, "When I prophesied concerning the destruction of the city."

Ver. 7. *Son of man, the place] Son of man, thou seest the place.* Houbigant. The prophet here refers to the promise formerly made in relation to the tabernacle and temple; alluding to Christ, in whom all the prophecies of the Old Testament are to have their final accomplishment. Zechariah prophecies of the Messiah, that he should *build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory*; that is to say, as the spiritual sense of these prophecies is explained in the New Testament, "He shall build the Christian church;" in him shall all the fulness of the Godhead dwell bodily, and reign; not in types and figures. Calmet explains the last phrase thus, "By adoring idols in my temple, and by burying their kings in my holy mountain." Others, by *carcases of their kings*, understand the lifeless images which were erected to those dead monarchs, who were deified and worshipped.

Ver. 8. *And the wall] And but a wall.* Houbigant.

Ver. 10. *Shew the house, &c.] Relate these things concerning the temple to the house, &c.* See the next verse. Houbigant.

Ver. 12. *The whole limit—shall be most holy]* "From the beginning of its declivity to the very top, in all the circumference of the temple, there shall no more be erected

"any building; no burial shall be performed there, nor any garden or other thing made, which is applicable to the common use of men. It shall be entirely holy, sacred, separate from all other employment, but that of the worship of the Lord." We find in Josephus, Antiq. lib. xv. cap. 14. that this was very ill observed in future time. The Ammonæan princes built up close to the north side a tower, which became very famous toward the latter end of the Jewish republic, under the name of the Antonian tower. On the west side there were four gates, one of which led to the royal palace; though elsewhere he describes the mountain of the temple as surrounded with very high walls, from the foot to the summit, except on the east side. The Jews tell us, that so profound a veneration was paid not only to the inclosure of the temple, but also to the whole extent of the mountain where it was built, that no one was permitted to walk there with a staff in his hand, or shoes on his feet, or his feet soiled with dust. They never carried money there, bound in their girdles or handkerchiefs; nor ever spat upon the ground or pavement; never passed from one gate to another, in order to shorten the way; but whatever gate they entered, they were to walk gravely and composedly on, straight to the place they were to go to. The excommunicated, and those who were in mourning, never ascended the mountain in the ordinary way, but obliquely, the left side foremost: the priests, Levites, and all the Israelites in general, who retired from the presence of the temple, never turned their back upon it; but with their head and body inclined to one side, left it respectfully,

round about *shall be* most holy. Behold, this *is* the law of the house.

13 ¶ And these *are* the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit *is* a cubit and an hand-breadth; even the bottom *shall be* a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about *shall be* a span: and this *shall be* the higher place of the altar.

14 And from the bottom *upon* the ground *even* to the lower settle *shall be* two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser settle *even* to the greater settle *shall be* four cubits, and the breadth *one* cubit.

15 So the altar *shall be* four cubits; and from the altar and upwards *shall be* four horns.

16 And the altar *shall be* twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof.

17 And the settle *shall be* fourteen cubits long and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof; and the border about it *shall be* half a cubit; and the bottom thereof *shall be* a cubit about; and his stairs shall look toward the east.

18 ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; These *are* the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon.

19 And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord GOD, a young bullock for a sin-offering.

20 And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put *it* on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about: thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it.

21 Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin-offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary.

22 And on the second day thou shalt offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin-offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they did cleanse *it* with the bullock.

23 When thou hast made an end of cleansing *it*, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish.

24 And thou shalt offer them before the LORD, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up *for* a burnt-offering unto the LORD.

25 Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat *for* a sin-offering: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish.

26 Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves.

27 And when these days are expired, it shall be, *that* upon the eighth day, and *so* forward, the priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord GOD.

walking backward, till they were entirely got from it. These rabbinical observations are the more suspicious, as the law enjoins nothing of the kind; and we read nothing either in the Old or New Testament, or in Josephus's History, which gives us any idea of these ceremonies; some indeed of which appear childish and ridiculous. The only prohibition hereafter given is, not to quit the temple by the same gate by which it was entered. See chap. xvi. 9.

Ver. 13. *Even the bottom, &c.] And the foundation shall be a cubit [in height], and the breadth a cubit over; and the border thereof, by the edge thereof and about, a span; and this shall be the ridge [or protuberant part] of the altar.* Houbigant.

Ver. 15. *So the altar, &c.] And the fire-grate, or hearth,*

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*shall be four cubits, and from the fire-place and upwards, &c. and so ver. 16. Houbigant, instead of altar, reads the higher part, and instead of settle, ver. 14, &c. he reads border.*

Ver. 17. *And his stairs] And its ascent.*

Ver. 21. *He shall burn it] It shall be burnt.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The temple was great and glorious, but infinitely greater the glory of the divine Inhabitant, who condescended there to take up his abode.

1. The same bright vision which had before been seen by the prophet, again appears from the east. It was the glory of the God of Israel; like many waters his voice was heard far off, his gospel having spread into distant lands, and the earth shined with his glory; his church, as the moon, reflecting

C H A P. XLIV.

*The east gate assigned only to the prince. The priests reproved for polluting of the sanctuary. Idolaters incapable of the priests' office. The sons of Zadok are accepted thereto. Ordinances for the priests.*

[Before Christ 574.]

**T**HEN he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it *was* shut.

2 Then said the LORD unto me, This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.

3 *It is* for the prince; the prince, he shall

fit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of *that* gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

4 ¶ Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD: and I fell upon my face.

5 And the LORD said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the LORD, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary.

reflecting the lustre that she has borrowed from him the Sun of righteousness.

2. This glory of God filled the house; and when the prophet in humble adoration had fallen prostrate on the earth, the Spirit took him up, and brought him to the inner court, to behold God's glory, and receive his instructions; and *the man*, Christ Jesus, stood by him; for through him alone can we hold communion with God, or hear his voice with comfort.

2dly, God, having taken possession of his temple, admonishes them of the obligations lying upon them, to be more faithful to him than they had ever yet been.

1. They had formerly grievously offended, and had been deservedly punished. They and their kings had been gross idolaters, and worshipped on the high places. They had corrupted the service of the sanctuary by their own inventions; had even dared to erect their idols and altars in that sacred place; and by such abominations had provoked God's wrath and indignation against them. *Note*; They who faithlessly depart from God, provoke him to take up the scourge, and to plague them for their offences.

2. He calls on them to repent, and graciously promises on that condition to make them such as he would have them be. They must *put away their vanities*, their idolatrous services, and the *carcasses of their kings*; which some suggest were buried in or near the house of God; or perhaps the idols themselves are meant, as loathsome in God's sight as a putrid corpse in ours; and in order to induce them hereunto, the prophet must shew them *the house*, that a sense of the mercy which God hath in store for them may work upon their hearts, and his goodness lead them to repentance; and if they expressed shame and confusion on the view of their past conduct, then he must go farther, and give them a more distinct view of the glorious fabric and all its parts; and give them in writing all the ordinances thereof, that they may keep them and do them. And while God is thus using the strongest motives, he promises to make them effectual to every

penitent, believing soul. *They shall defile my name no more*; yea, he will engage their hearts to his blessed self, and, in consequence thereof, *dwell in the midst of them for ever*, yea, with all his faithful people, as their God. *Note*; (1.) When we begin to return to God, every step we take will give us fresh reason for deeper humiliation and self-loathing. (2.) They who are restored to God's favour, will above all things desire to walk henceforth in his ways.

3. The law of God's house is declared; not only the sanctuary, but the whole mountain is now most holy; no veil in the gospel church excludes the believer, but *by the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest*, Heb. x. 19. and are called upon as his disciples to *perfect holiness* in the fear of God.

3dly, We have,

1. *The altar*: typical of the Lord Jesus, through whom all our sacrifices find acceptance with God; and the sinner who flies to the horns of this altar shall find a sure refuge from fear of evil.

2. The consecration of the altar, and the service to be performed on it, which God promises to accept. Christ, by offering his own blood as the atonement, has consecrated himself as the altar, and every believer is now a spiritual priest, ordained to offer spiritual sacrifices thereon, acceptable and well-pleasing to God through him.

C H A P. XLIV.

*Ver. 2. Therefore it shall be shut*] This is very ill pointed, and improperly separated from the third verse. It should be read thus, *Therefore it shall be shut for the prince.* *Ver. 3. The same prince shall sit in it, &c.* See chap. xlv. 1—3. and Houbigant. The kings of Judah had a distinguished place in the temple; a kind of tribunal, placed opposite the eastern gate. See ch. xlv. 12. 2 Chron. vi. 12, 13.

*Ver. 5. All the ordinances, &c.*] *All the lineaments, and all the forms of the house of the Lord; and mark well, in the going forth of the temple, all these who depart from the sanctuary.* Houbigant.

*Ver.*



6 And thou shalt say to the rebellious, *even* to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations.

7 In that ye have brought *into my sanctuary* strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, *even* my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations.

8 And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves.

9 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that *is* among the children of Israel.

10 And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity.

11 Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, *having* charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt-offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them.

12 Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their iniquity.

13 And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things in the most holy *place*: but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed.

14 But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein.

15 ¶ But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD:

16 They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

17 ¶ And it shall come to pass, *that* when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within.

18 They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird *themselves* with any thing that causeth sweat.

19 And when they go forth into the utter court, *even* into the utter court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments.

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*Ver. 7. When ye offer my bread, &c.]* "At the same time that ye offer sacrifices upon the altar, or that ye suffer heathens to offer at that altar, expressly against the law." By *bread* may be understood the meat-offering made of flour: the *fat* and *blood* of every sacrifice were peculiarly appropriated to God. Instead of, *and they have broken*, Houbigant reads, *and break*.

*Ver. 8. But ye have set keepers]* *And you make those who minister in my sanctuary, your own ministers.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 10. The Levites that are gone away, &c.]* Many of these desisted from attending upon God's service, and fell into idolatry, first in the general apostacy of the ten tribes, afterwards under Ahaz and other wicked kings. These should be degraded from attending upon the higher offices belonging to the priesthood; God having particularly

threatened to punish the sin of idolatry unto the third and fourth generation; idolatry being, according to the law of the Jews, one of the crimes which was punished with the deprivation of the priesthood. See Lowth and Calmet. Houbigant renders the verse thus, *And the Levites also who departed from me, and who drew astray those of the children of Israel who went after their Gods, shall bear their iniquity.*

*Ver. 13. And they shall not]* *For they shall not.*

*Ver. 15. The Levites]* The whole passage, from ver. 10. to ver. 16., seems most naturally to refer to the period of time when the second temple was rebuilt.

*Ver. 17. And within]* *And within the house or temple.*

*Ver. 18. With any thing that causeth sweat]* *With any thing that is torn.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 19. They shall not sanctify, &c.]* By approaching them

20 Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads.

21 Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court.

22 Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before.

23 And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

24 And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths.

25 And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves.

26 And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days.

27 And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin-offering, saith the Lord God.

28 And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: I *am* their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I *am* their possession.

29 They shall eat the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs.

30 And the first of all the first-fruits of all *things*, and every oblation of all, of every *sort* of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house.

31 The priest shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast.

them in these habits, by touching them when clad in their dress of ceremony; this would sanctify the people, and incapacitate them from discharging their ordinary occupations. The touching of holy things defiles those who touch them unworthily, and sanctifies those who approach them in a manner conformably to the laws. The sacred habits were only for the ministers of the Lord; the laity who touched them were obliged to purify themselves; to expiate their offence. *Whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy*, says Moses, Exod. xxx. 29. *To sanctify or be holy* is put here in a contrary sense, for *to defile*.

*Ver. 20. Neither shall they shave, &c.*] The Jews understand this as an expression of mourning for the dead. The words in the original contain a general prohibition, including the times of mourning, as well as other seasons. St. Jerome supposes, that the Jewish priests were forbidden to shave their heads, in order to distinguish them from several of the heathen priests; particularly the Egyptian priests of Isis and Serapis, who had their heads shaved and uncovered. See Calmet, and Lev. x.

*Ver. 23. And cause them to discern*] *And declare to them what is the difference.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 28. And it shall be unto them, &c.*] Houbigant very properly, after the Vulgate, reads, *And they shall have no inheritance*; agreeably to what follows.

*Ver. 30. Ye shall also give—the first of your dough*] See Lev. ii. 4.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet, following his heavenly guide, returns to the east gate; which, in honour

of him whose glory entered the temple thereat, was kept shut ever after, only the prince was admitted to eat his part of the peace-offerings in the porch, and to go in and out *by the way of the porch of that gate*; which some interpreters suppose to represent the church of Christ upon earth, shut against all profane and impenitent sinners, and only open to those who, by the faith of Jesus, become one with him, and so have *boldness to enter into the holiest of all*.

2dly, Once more we have the prophet prostrate, adoring the great God whose glory he beheld. Deep views of the divine majesty will ever produce the most abasing apprehensions of ourselves.

1: The prophet is charged to take notice of what he saw, and attend to what was told him; for they whom God employs must carefully observe his orders, and be first taught themselves of him, before they can be effectual teachers of others.

2. He is commanded, [1.] To deliver the message that God gave him to the house of Israel, that rebellious house, to convince them of their sins. Their abominations were great, and it was high time for them to amend: they had introduced into the sanctuary the uncircumcised and the profane, to the defilement of that holy place, and the great dishonour of God; and instead of choosing the most able, zealous, and godly ministers from among the priests and Levites, *ye have set keepers in my sanctuary for yourselves*; such as studied to please, not profit them, and would flatter them in their sins, instead of testifying against them. *Note*; (1.) They who begin to taste any thing of the

## CHAP. XLV.

*The portion of land for the sanctuary, for the city, and for the prince. Ordinances for the prince.*

[Before Christ 574.]

**M**OREOVER, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall

offer an oblation unto the LORD, an holy portion of the land: the length *shall be* the length of five and twenty thousand *reeds*, and the breadth *shall be* ten thousand. This *shall be* holy in all the borders thereof round about.

2 Of this there shall be for the sanctuary

the bitterness of sin, will reflect with grief on every moment of the time past when they walked therein. (2.) It is a high profanation of Christ's table, when persons profane and immoral are admitted thereunto; and he will resent the provocation. (3.) They who choose flattering priests will perish in their own delusions. [2.] To point out to them the path of duty. *No stranger, uncircumcised in heart or flesh, may enter the sanctuary*; and happy would it be for the church of Christ, if these directions were more carefully observed, and none admitted to partake of her most sacred ordinances, much less entrusted with the ministry, who have not given some satisfactory evidence by their principles and practice, that they are partakers of the grace of God in truth.

3dly, The Lord takes account of his servants.

1. The unfaithful are degraded: they had betrayed their trust; and as a minister's ill example has ever the most pernicious effects, their idolatry had emboldened the people in their iniquities; therefore God will suffer them no more to minister as formerly before him: yet not utterly to exclude them, and sink them in utter despair, and as if no place was left for repentance, they are still to be employed in the more servile offices, and to partake in the provision of God's house, bearing their shame, though not yet utterly cast away. *Note*; (1.) The church will never recover her primitive beauty, till her primitive discipline is restored. (2.) Though open offenders must be put to shame, too much severity and rigour may drive those to despair whom we should desire to lead to repentance.

2. The faithful are distinguished. *The sons of Zadok*, who in the general apostacy maintained their integrity, are confirmed in their office, and in the high honour of drawing near to God in his most solemn services. Fidelity shall never lose its reward; and they who know the happiness of communion with God desire no higher honour or greater reward than to be established his servants, and preserved in a constant state of nearness to his blessed self.

4thly, The faithful, who are appointed to minister before God, have here directions given them:

1. Concerning their clothes. They must wear linen garments when they are employed in their ministry, and put them off when they have finished the service, *and not sanctify the people with their garments*; as if the touch of them communicated any holiness, or lest any superstitious conceit might be entertained thereof by the people. The ministers of Christ, above all others, are especially called upon to keep their garments clean from every spot; for on them every eye will be fixed.

2. Concerning their hair. They must not be on the

one hand shaved, as the priests of Egypt, nor on the other offensively affect long hair, but have their heads polled. The Romish friars choose to copy after their heathen predecessors.

3. Concerning their drink. No wine must enter their lips when they went in to minister. *Note*; Nothing can be conceived in a christian minister more scandalously infamous than intemperance.

4. Concerning their marriages. They may not take for a wife a woman divorced, lest her suspicious character bring a dishonour upon her husband; nor a widow, unless it be a priest's widow; but a maiden of the house of Israel. *Note*; (1.) It is a mark of the antichristian church to forbid marriage to the clergy. (2.) Ministers, above all others, for the honour of their high office, need be especially careful whom they choose for their yoke-fellow.

5. Concerning the exercise of their ministry. [1.] They must teach the people *the difference between the holy and profane, between the unclean and the clean*; and this with regard to persons, principles, and practices; pointing out the evil as to be avoided, and the good to be embraced and followed. [2.] In appeals made to them, they must judge impartially according to God's word. [3.] In their assemblies they must be directed in their worship and discipline by his laws and statutes, and *hallow God's sabbaths*, both in private and public, and exhort others to do the same.

6. Concerning their mourning. They may not come near a dead corpse, which would make them ceremonially unclean, and prevent them from approaching the sanctuary: only for those nearest relations specified, they may defile themselves; but before they return to their sacred services again, they must be cleansed by a *sin-offering*. Though ministers are not forbidden to sorrow as men, they must be examples of resignation, and see that their grief do not break in upon the duties of their office.

7. Concerning their maintenance. They had no inheritance in Israel, but their provision arose from the altar which they served: God was their possession, whose favour is the richest portion; and while they exerted themselves in his service, the piety of the people would procure them plenty of all needful things; so that they should not be reduced to eat what died of itself, or was torn; and, in return, the blessing of God's ministers resting upon the people would amply compensate them for what they employed in his service and the maintenance of his ministers. *Note*; God's ministers have a right to live by the altars which they serve; and it is the interest, as well as duty of the people, to take care of them; for the blessing of God in answer to their prayers shall be an abundant recompence.

five hundred *in length*, with five hundred *in breadth*, square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof.

3 And of this measure shalt thou measure the length of five and twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary *and* the most holy place.

4 The holy *portion* of the land shall be for the priests the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the LORD: and it shall be a place for their houses, and an holy place for the sanctuary.

5 And the five and twenty thousand of length and the ten thousand of breadth shall also the Levites, the ministers of the house, have for themselves, for a possession for twenty chambers.

6 ¶ And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy *portion*: it shall be for the whole house of Israel.

7 ¶ And a *portion* shall be for the prince on the one side and on the other side of the oblation of the holy *portion*, and of the possession of the city, before the oblation of the holy *portion* and before the possession of the city, from the west side westward, and from the east side eastward: and the length shall be over against one of the portions, from the west border unto the east border.

8 In the land shall be his possession in Israel: and my princes shall no more oppress my people; and *the rest* of the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes.

9 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord GOD.

10 Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath.

11 The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of an homer, and the ephah the tenth part of an homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer.

12 And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your maneh.

13 This is the oblation that ye shall offer; the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of barley:

14 Concerning the ordinance of oil, the bath of oil, ye shall offer the tenth part of a bath out of the cor, *which is* an homer of ten baths; for ten baths are an homer:

15 And one lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat pastures of Israel; for a meat-offering, and for a burnt offering, and for peace-offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord GOD.

16 All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince in Israel.

17 And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt-offerings, and meat-offerings, and drink-offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin-offering, and the meat-offering, and the burnt-

#### C H A P. XLV.

*Ver. 1. When ye shall divide by lot the land*] The land was first divided by lot under Joshua, a particular share of which was to be God's portion, as an acknowledgement of his sovereign dominion. See Lowth, Numb. xxvii. 55. and the note on chap. xlviii. 35. of this book. Instead of *offer an oblation*, Houbigant reads, *set off a part*; and so throughout the chapter; and *cubits* instead of *reeds*.

*Ver. 5. And the five and twenty thousand, &c.*] *And there shall be other five and twenty thousand of length, and ten thousand of breadth; and it shall be for the Levites, the ministers of the house, for them for a possession; twenty ranges of building: or, as some render the last clause, for cities to dwell in.* See Archbishop Newcombe on this passage.

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*Ver. 6. It shall be for the whole house of Israel*] "This shall be the capital city, to which all the tribes shall resort upon the solemn festivals; which shall have twelve gates, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel." See Lowth, Rev. xi. 1.

*Ver. 7. And the length shall be, &c.*] *Shall be answerable to every one of these portions on the west border, and on the east border.*

*Ver. 8. In the land, &c.*] *This shall be his possession of land in Israel.*

*Ver. 16. Shall give this oblation for the prince*] All the people of the land shall be obliged to give this present, or offering, to the prince; not, as some will have it, *with the prince*, for what the prince was to give follows after.

3 B

*Ver.*

offering, and the peace-offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel.

18 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, thou shalt take a young bullock without blemish, and cleanse the sanctuary:

19 And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin-offering, and put it upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court.

20 And so thou shalt do the seventh *day* of the month for every one that erreth, and for *him that is simple*: so shall ye reconcile the house.

21 In the first *month*, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten.

22 And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock *for a sin-offering*.

23 And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt-offering to the LORD, seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish daily the seven days; and a kid of the goats daily *for a sin-offering*.

24 And he shall prepare a meat-offering of an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and an hin of oil for an ephah:

25 In the seventh *month*, in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he do the like in the feast of the seven days, according to the sin-offering, according to the burnt-offering, and according to the meat offering, and according to the oil.

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*Ver. 25. In the seventh month*] "He shall do at the feast of tabernacles all the same things which have already been appointed for him to do on the passover."

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The division of the land here directed is very different from that made by Moses and Joshua, and the extent of the country divided vastly exceeds that ancient inheritance of God's Israel, the land of Canaan: this, therefore, may properly be referred to the kingdom of Christ, and his church, enlarged by the vast accession of converts both of Jews and Gentiles.

1. The first portion is for God, his sanctuary in the midst, and around it the abode of the priests and Levites, with the land appropriated for their use; and this is considered as *an oblation unto the Lord*; for what is done to them for his sake, he accepts as done unto himself. Their residence is near the sanctuary, for there must their constant attendance be. A non-resident minister of Christ is a contradiction in terms.

2. The next portion is for the city, where the whole house of Israel, some at least of every tribe, dwell: a figure of the Israel of God, united in one communion, and become one fold under one shepherd.

3. The portion of the prince is allotted him without: the admeasurement is not mentioned, but enough to maintain his dignity, and prevent the oppression of the people; which some interpret of the prince Messiah, whose dominion shall extend east and west, and who is around his church and people as a guard to protect them from the inroads of every enemy. (But see the Annotations).

4. The rest of the land is appointed for the tribes to inhabit, who, under the government of their prince Messiah, shall be safe and happy.

2dly, We have,

1. An injunction laid on the princes to avoid all oppression, and minister true judgment to the people, it being high time to put an end to the past scene of extortion and violence. Princes must remember that they are but men,

and accountable to him from whom they have received their power; the abuse of which will in the end prove fatally ruinous to themselves.

2. The people must exercise uprightness in their dealings toward each other, and particularly be conscientiously exact in their coins, weights, and measures. True piety towards God will ever produce honesty towards men.

3dly, Particular directions are laid down for the service of God.

1. Respecting the oblations to be offered by all the people of the land: of their corn a sixtieth part; of their wine a hundredth; of their lambs one in two hundred, from the fattest pastures, must be offered, *for the prince in Israel, or to the prince in Israel*, the Lord Jesus, to whose honour these were devoted for the more immediate service of his church, and for whose sake they are accepted. *Note*; (1.) They who enjoy the blessings of God's providence are bound to honour him with a part of their abundance. (2.) Our oblations, prayers, and praises are then accepted, when the atoning blood of the Lamb has made the reconciliation, and opened for us a way to the throne of God.

2. Respecting their solemnities, which differed very much from the Mosaical institutions, and intimated a change in that dispensation:

[1.] On the first day of the year the sanctuary was to be cleansed by the blood of a sin-offering; and the same ceremony was to be repeated on the seventh day for him that had *erred* and was *simple*. Even sanctuaries on earth have need of the atoning blood; the purest societies of Christians must ever apply to the atoning blood; and we are bound every year, yea, every day, to beg the forgiveness of our negligences and ignorances, which, without the all-powerful intercession and oblation of the great high priest of our profession, Jesus Christ, must eternally destroy us.

[2.] On the fourteenth of Nisan the passover is to be kept, with the seven days of unleavened bread; and a bullock each day, offered for a sin-offering, prepared by the

## C H A P. XLVI.

*Ordinances for the prince in his worship, and for the people.  
An order for the prince's inheritance. The courts for boiling  
and baking.*

[Before Christ 574.]

**T**HUS saith the Lord GOD; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened.

2 And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of *that* gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priest shall prepare his burnt-offering and his peace-offerings; and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening.

3 Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the LORD in the sabbaths and in the new moons.

4 And the burnt-offering that the prince shall offer unto the LORD in the sabbath-day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish.

5 And the meat-offering shall be an ephah for a ram, and the meat-offering for the lambs as he shall be able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah.

6 And in the day of the new moon it shall be a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish.

7 And he shall prepare a meat-offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and an hin of oil to an ephah.

8 And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of *that* gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof.

9 ¶ But when the people of the land shall come before the LORD in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it.

the prince, with its meat and drink-offering; besides a kid of the goats each day for a sin-offering, and seven bullocks and rams for a burnt-offering. All which are typical of the Lord Jesus, who has prepared himself a sacrifice for us, and is our passover, by whose blood we have received the atonement, to whom we must have an eye in all our approaches to God, and on whom by faith we must feast, to the strengthening and refreshing of our souls.

[3.] On the seventh month, the fifteenth day, the feast of tabernacles is ordered to be observed seven days, with the same sacrifices as before: all pointing to the great Redeemer, and directing us to him in and through whom alone all our services are accepted of God.

## C H A P. XLVI.

*Ver. 2. The prince shall enter, &c.]* It is observable, that Ezekiel never calls this future ruler of the Jews a king; whereby alone those interpreters are condemned who have explained that of *Zerubbabel*, which was foretold by the other prophets of the king, the son of David, hereafter to reign; when they would have that said of Zerubbabel, which the prophets had foretold of the Messiah. Houbigant.

*Ver. 3. The people—shall worship, &c.]* During the continuance of the tabernacle, they who would offer any sacrifice were required to bring it to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and there lay their hands upon it. They came to the porch or south gate of the inner court, according as the sacrifice was to be slain on the

north or south side of the altar, and there presented their sacrifice. Here the inner porch of the east gate was assigned for their station who came to present themselves before the Lord upon the solemn festivals; and they were to come no farther into the inner court. See Lightfoot.

*Ver. 5. As he shall be able to give]* With respect to the lambs, no particular quantity of oil or flour is prescribed; he was to give "according to his ability and devotion." The same expression is used in the 7th and 11th verses.

*Ver. 9. He that entereth in by the way of the north gate, &c.]* Some are of opinion, that these words imply the reason why the people were not to come in at the east gate; because, there being no passage or thoroughfare out of the temple westward, if they had entered in at the east gate, they must have returned back the same way they came in; which would have been turning their backs as it were upon the place of God's residence. Dr. Spencer mentions this as a rule in the Talmud, "That they who come within the holy mount, should enter in by the way of the right hand, and go out by the left; understanding by the right hand the northern part of the temple, and by the left hand the southern?" and he is of opinion, that God designed to take away that superstitious distinction between the several gates of the temple, by commanding that every one should go out the opposite way to that by which he came in, whether to the south or the north. See Spencer, de Leg. Heb.; and the note on chap. xliii. 12.

10 And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth.

11 And in the feasts and in the solemnities the meat-offering shall be an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram, and to the lambs as he is able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah.

12 Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt-offering, or peace-offerings voluntarily unto the LORD, *one* shall then open him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt-offering, and his peace-offerings, as he did on the sabbath-day: then he shall go forth; and after his going forth *one* shall shut the gate.

13 Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt-offering unto the LORD of a lamb of the first year without blemish: thou shalt prepare it every morning.

14 And thou shalt prepare a meat-offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of an hin of oil, to temper with the fine flour; a meat-offering continually by a perpetual ordinance unto the LORD.

15 Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meat-offering, and the oil, every morning for a continual burnt-offering.

16 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons'; it shall be their possession by inheritance.

17 But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the

prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons' for them.

18 Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; *but* he shall give his sons' inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.

19 ¶ After he brought me through the entry, which *was* at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests, which looked toward the north: and, behold, there *was* a place on the two sides westward.

20 Then said he unto me, This *is* the place where the priests shall boil the trespass-offering and the sin-offering, where they shall bake the meat-offering; that they bear *them* not out into the utter court, to sanctify the people.

21 Then he brought me forth into the utter court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and, behold, in every corner of the court *there was* a court.

22 In the four corners of the court *there were* courts joined of forty cubits long and thirty broad: these four corners *were* of one measure.

23 And *there was* a row of building round about in them, round about them four, and *it was* made with boiling-places under the rows round about.

24 Then said he unto me, These *are* the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifice of the people.

*Ver. 10. And the prince in the midst of them] And the prince shall enter in the midst of them; and in the midst of them shall he go forth. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 17. To the year of liberty] That is, of jubilee; called the year of liberty, because it freed men's persons from the service of their masters, and their estates from any engagements by which the right of them was transferred from their owners. See Calmet, and Levit. xxv. 10, 11.*

*Ver. 22. In the four corners, &c.] These little courts were in the shape of an oblong square, joined with inner walls to the outside walls of the court. The Hebrew word, קטרוֹת *keturoth*, translated *joined*, may be rendered *made with chimneys*; which sense agrees with the uses for which these courts were designed. See Calmet.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The rules here prescribed for the place and manner of God's worship, like the preceding solemnities, differ far from those prescribed by the law of Moses.

1. The east gate, which at other times was always shut, chap. xliv. 2. was to be opened for the prince on the sabbaths, the new moons, and when the prince offered a voluntary sacrifice; though, it seems, he must not go through it into the inner court, but stand in the porch, by the post of the door, whence he might see the priests offering the sacrifice that he brought. By the north and south gates the people were to enter the courts of the house, observing always to return by the gate opposite that by which they came in: and on the sabbaths and new moons



C H A P. XLVII.

*The vision of the holy waters. The virtue of them. The borders of the land. The division of it by lot.*

[Before Christ 574.]

**A**FTERWARD he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

2 Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way

that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3 And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ancles.

4 Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.

5 Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

moons they were to attend the prince at the east gate, who should be in the midst of them, their leader and example in the holy service. *Note;* (1.) It is the greatest glory of a prince to be a pattern of true piety to his people. (2.) They who are the highest on earth, will, when they know themselves, think themselves honoured in the meanest place in the church of God. (3.) With Christ our king at our head, we may boldly draw near to the throne of God, and be assured of gracious acceptance in his sight. (4.) When we set our hearts toward the heavenly temple, we must not look back, but, still forgetting the things which are behind, must press forward to those that are before.

2. The sacrifices which the prince must provide are, a daily burnt-offering of a lamb; on the sabbath six lambs and a ram; on the new moons a young bullock was moreover added: all of them without blemish, with their several meat and drink offerings, some of which were much larger than was ordered by the law of Moses, while those for the lambs are left to his ability. Our offerings at God's altar must be proportioned to the prosperity with which he has blessed us. Where he has given much, he expects the more.

2dly, If a prince wanted to leave an inheritance to any of his children, he is permitted to settle a part of his possessions upon him, and it would continue to his descendants for ever; but if he made a gift of land to any of his servants, it must revert to his family again at the year of Jubilee. These gifts must be out of his own patrimony, and not the fruits of oppression, or the plunder of his people. A king must by his mild and equitable rule gain the love of his subjects; this will prove his greatest riches; for then they will be devoted under God to his service.

3dly, The altar being so liberally supplied as above with sacrifices, part of which belonged to the priests, and were to be eaten in the holy place, there were boilers and ovens near their chambers, where they prepared these holy things; none of which might be carried out into the utter court to sanctify the people, who might fancy, that par-

taking of these holy things would recommend them to God's favour, or that but touching them communicated virtue. Such superstitious conceits the ministers of the sanctuary must never countenance.

C H A P. XLVII.

*Ver. 1. Behold, waters issued out]* There was a large quantity of water for the uses of the temple, conveyed in pipes under ground from the fountain of *Etam*. From these waters the prophet draws his similitude of the salutiferous waters, which increased as they flowed, till they reached the borders of Israel; hereby not obscurely prefiguring that salvation which was to flow forth from Jerusalem to all the children of Abraham by faith. So it is elsewhere foretold, *a law shall go forth from Sion; and ye that are athirst, come to the waters, &c.* Waters first flow towards the south of the temple, then to the east; which was the first course of the gospel, before it was disseminated widely among the Gentiles. Houbigant.

*Ver. 2. Then brought he me out of the way, &c.]* Out by the way, &c. Houbigant. *There ran out waters on the right side;* that is to say, from the south of the temple to the east; therefore the measure of the *thousand cubits*, which is made afterwards, is made from west to east, and the farther the river recedes from the temple the deeper it becomes. See Houbigant.

*Ver. 3—5. And when the man—went forth]* The gradual rise of the waters denotes the large effusion of the Spirit, which was very remarkable at the first publication of the gospel, and its wonderful increase from small beginnings; as well as some future and large effusion of that Spirit, when God shall be pleased to pour it forth upon the Jews for their conversion. The supplies of grace are often represented under the metaphor of a river, and streams watering a dry and thirsty soil, and cleansing and making fruitful the ground where they pass. Many of the ideas in this chapter are taken from the terrestrial paradise; see *ver. 7 and 12.* which ideas are also carried to the celestial paradise by St. John, *Rev. xxii.*

*Ver.*

6 ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen *this*? then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.

7 Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river *were* very many trees on the one side and on the other.

8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: *which being* brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

9 And it shall come to pass, *that* every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the river shall come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.

10 And it shall come to pass, *that* the fishers shall stand upon it from En-ge-di even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a *place* to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.

11 But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt.

12 And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed:

it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

13 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD; This *shall be* the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph *shall have two* portions.

14 And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: *concerning* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance.

15 And this *shall be* the border of the land toward the north side: from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad:

16 Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which *is* between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazar-hatticon, which *is* by the coast of Hauran.

17 And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And *this is* the north side.

18 And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel *by* Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And *this is* the east side.

19 And the south side southward, from Tamar *even* to the waters of strife *in* Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And *this is* the south side southward.

*Ver. 8. And go down into the desert*] That is to say, along the plain towards the lake, where Sodom formerly stood, called the Dead or Salt Sea. Almost all the writers who describe this *sea* or *lake*, observe, that nothing can live in it. The text tells us, that these living and salubrious streams, by mixing with the salt and brackish waters of the sea, shall render them wholesome, and fit for use; mystically implying the healing virtue of God's grace in curing the vices of corrupt man.

*Ver. 9. And it shall come to pass*] As no fish can live in the Dead Sea, so, on the contrary, the waters which flow from the fountain of salvation shall give life to all who drink of them. See Exod. vii. 18. By the *fishers* in the next verse may be understood the apostles, and other ministers of the gospel. *En-ge-di* was situated at the beginning of the Red Sea, near the Jordan; and *En-eglaim* where it disembogues itself.

*Ver. 11. But the miry places, &c.*] Hereby are meant, says Calmet, those wicked Christians, who dishonour the

church whereof they are corrupt members. *Salt* here signifies sterility.

*Ver. 12. Whose leaf shall not fade*] Flourishing like the trees of paradise; a very proper emblem of the righteous and faithful; *still bringing forth fruit unto holiness, and whose end is everlasting life.* See the description of the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxii. 1-5.

*Ver. 13. This shall be the border*] By the captivities of Judah and Israel, the several limits or borders belonging to the inheritance of each tribe were obliterated and forgotten; whereupon here is a new boundary and division of the Holy Land, which is to be understood in a mystical sense also. The places hereafter mentioned were the boundaries of the Holy Land, as will appear from an inspection of the map of Canaan.

*Ver. 15. Great sea*] Mediterranean sea.

*Ver. 17. And the north, northward, &c.*] And Zaphen to the north, and Hamath the border. Houbigant.

*Ver. 18. Unto the east sea, &c.*] Unto the Dead Sea on the east.

*Ver.*

20 The west side also *shall be* the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This *is* the west side.

21 So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel.

22 ¶ And it shall come to pass, *that* ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among

you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel.

23 And it shall come to pass, *that* in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give *him* his inheritance, saith the Lord God.

*Ver. 22. And to the strangers]* Neither under Joshua, nor under Zerubbabel, were the Jews allowed to give strangers a part of their inheritance with them; this therefore can only be understood as a prediction of that which happened under the Lord Jesus Christ, when strangers were admitted into the heritage of Israel, and put in possession of the true land of promise, without distinction of Jew or Gentile; *for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.* See Rom. x. 12. and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The waters of the sanctuary mentioned above are by many commentators supposed to signify the gospel of Jesus, the blessed effects and glorious extent of it being hereby represented. There was nothing like these streams flowing from the material temple at Jerusalem, and therefore they consider it necessary to take the vision in a mystical sense.

1. The fountain-head was in the sanctuary, and from the threshold of the house the waters issued. In the temple did Christ and his apostles daily teach, and thence did the word of the Lord go forth into the Gentile lands; and he himself is both the temple and the door, from which these living waters flow, and who gives them their quickening power and efficacy.

2. The course of the river was eastward; and then, either by dividing its streams, or by winding round, it turned west into the sea, the Dead Sea or the Lake of Sodom, or, as some suppose, into the Mediterranean. The gospel, which began to be preached at first in Galilee, and spread afterwards chiefly through the countries that lay east of Judæa, went forth in process of time into all lands, even to the ends of the earth.

3. The waters, as they ran, grew wider and deeper: the prophet and his divinely-appointed guide, crossing them three times at the distance of a thousand cubits each from the fountain-head, found the river swoln from their ankles to their knees, then risen to their loins; and when the fourth time they would have crossed the waters, they were no longer fordable. And this may refer, [1.] To the spreading of the gospel in the world: from small beginnings the church of God has increased exceedingly, and shall go on still enlarging, till the whole earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. [2.] To the truths of God, which the farther we search the deeper we shall find them. Some things are plain and obvious, and reach but to the ankles; in others more abstruse, experience and inquiry will lead us farther up to the loins; whilst in some, the farther we

go, the more we are lost, and can only stand on the river's brink, and cry with St. Paul, *O the depth!* Rom. xi. 33. [3.] To the work of grace in the faithful soul, which by continual accessions of light and love from the great fountain-head, increases with the increase of God, till we come to the perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

4. Wherever these streams went forth, their wondrous virtue appeared: even the waters of Sodom were *healed*: for such is the mighty efficacy of the Saviour's grace, that it reaches to the most desperate; the vilest may find pardon through his blood, and renovation by the power of his Spirit: to the uttermost his salvation extends, and none are beyond it, who do not wilfully reject it. *And whithersoever these rivers came, they communicated life*; such is the quickening influence which attends the gospel of Jesus: wherever it is preached, dead sinners live, and, like a well-watered tree, the souls of believers are green and flourishing: but the obstinate and impenitent are left to their misery as *the marshes and miry places*; abandoned to eternal ruin.

5. Vast shoals of fish shall live in this river, and the fishermen cast in their nets, and dry them on the banks thereof; intimating the multitude of converts that by the preaching of the gospel shall be called into the church of Christ, and the diligence and laboriousness of the ministers of Christ, as well as the success of their ministrations; for their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

6. On the banks every useful tree for food or physic grew, their leaf never fading, their fruit ever abounding; see Rev. xxii. 2. These represent the souls of the faithful saints of God, the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, deriving from Jesus their life and vigour; watered every moment by his grace; green in their professions; in every good work bringing forth fruit to the glory of God; pouring the balm of friendly advice and consolation into the hearts of the tempted and afflicted; and, persevering in every labour of love, till their life of grace on earth shall be exchanged for the eternal life of glory in heaven.

2dly, The borders of the land here marked out are considerably larger than those described by Moses and Joshua, or than the country possessed by the Israelites after their return from the Babylonish captivity; which may be understood typically of the church of Christ, and the true Israel of God, which, under the gospel dispensation, should have a great increase.

Joseph has two portions, to complete the number of the twelve tribes, Levi being taken to attend the sanctuary, and having a portion adjoining thereunto. They are to divide

## C H A P. XLVIII.

*The portions of the twelve tribes, of the sanctuary, of the city and suburbs, and of the prince. The dimensions and gates of the city.*

[Before Christ 574.]

**N**OW these *are* the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east *and* west; a *portion* for Dan.

2 And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side, a *portion* for Asher.

3 And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west side, a *portion* for Naphtali.

4 And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west side a *portion* for Manasseh.

5 And by the border of Manasseh, from the east side unto the west side, a *portion* for Ephraim.

6 And by the border of Ephraim from the east side even unto the west side, a *portion* for Reuben.

7 And by the border of Reuben, from the east side unto the west side, a *portion* for Judah.

8 ¶ And by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side, shall be the offering which ye shall offer of five and twenty thousand *reebs* in breadth, and *in* length as one of the *other* parts, from the east side unto

the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it.

9 The oblation that ye shall offer unto the LORD *shall be* of five and twenty thousand in length, and of ten thousand in breadth.

10 And for them, *even* for the priests, shall be *this* holy oblation; toward the north five and twenty thousand *in* length, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length: and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the midst thereof.

11 *It shall be* for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok; which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray.

12 And *this* oblation of the land that is offered shall be unto them a thing most holy by the border of the Levites.

13 And over against the border of the priests the Levites *shall have* five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth: all the length *shall be* five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand.

14 And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the first fruits of the land: for *it is* holy unto the LORD.

15 ¶ And the five thousand, that are left in the breadth over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane *place* for the city,

divide the land into twelve equal shares; see Rev. vii. 4—8. which was not the case at the first division of the country, when the greater tribes had more, and the smaller less. But now, in the militant church of Christ, believers are all entitled to the same blessings and privileges.

Here also the strangers are allowed to inherit among native Israelites, which before was forbidden; for now the middle wall of partition is taken down, and the Gentiles made fellow-heirs and of the same body, members of the glorious dispensation of the gospel of Christ.

## C H A P. XLVIII.

*Ver. 8. Shall be the offering, &c.] Shall be the sacred portion which they shall set apart of five-and-twenty thousand cubits.*

*Ver. 9. The oblation, &c.] The holy portion which you shall set apart: and so throughout the chapter.*

*Ver. 10. Toward the north, &c.] Towards the north the length shall be five-and-twenty thousand cubits; likewise towards the south the length shall be five-and-twenty thousand cubits; and the breadth toward the east shall be ten thousand cubits, and toward the west ten thousand cubits; and, &c. Houbigant. See ver. 16.*

*Ver. 11. As the Levites, &c.] The word Levites is here used in its greatest latitude, and comprehends the priests as well as those who are properly called Levites. Many of these had defiled themselves with idolatry; for which crime they were to be degraded from the honours and privileges due to those priests who had continued faithful in their office. See note on chap. xiv. 10.*

*Ver. 13. And over against the border] And beside the border.*

*Ver. 15. Over against, &c.] Beside the five-and-twenty thousand shall be common [ground] for the city.*

*Ver.*

for dwelling, and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof.

16 And these shall be the measures thereof; the north side four thousand and five hundred, and the south side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east side four thousand and five hundred, and the west side four thousand and five hundred.

17 And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty.

18 And the residue in length over against the oblation of the holy portion shall be ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy portion: and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city.

19 And they that serve the city shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel.

20 All the oblation shall be five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation four-square, with the possession of the city.

21 ¶ And the residue shall be for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy oblation, and of the possession of the city, over against the five and twenty thousand of the oblation toward the east border, and westward over against the five and twenty thousand toward the west border, over against the portions for the prince: and it shall be the holy

oblation; and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the midst thereof.

22 Moreover, from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city, being in the midst of that which is the prince's, between the border of Judah, and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince.

23 ¶ As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side unto the west side: Benjamin shall have a portion.

24 And by the border of Benjamin, from the east side unto the west side, Simeon shall have a portion.

25 And by the border of Simeon, from the east side unto the west side, Issachar a portion.

26 And by the border of Issachar, from the east side unto the west side, Zebulun a portion.

27 And by the border of Zebulun, from the east side unto the west side, Gad a portion.

28 And by the border of Gad, at the south side southward the border shall be even from Tamar unto the waters of strife in Kadesh, and to the river toward the great sea.

29 This is the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these are their portions, saith the Lord God.

30 ¶ And these are the goings out of the city on the north side, four thousand and five hundred measures.

31 And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates

Ver. 21. And on the other, &c.] And on the other, of the holy portion, and of the possession of the city before the five-and-twenty thousand of the sacred portion, toward the east border; and westward, before the five-and-twenty thousand toward the west border; besides these portions shall be that belonging to the prince: and this shall be the holy portion, &c. Houbigant renders the last clause, and the sanctuary of the temple, and that which shall be reserved for the sanctuary, shall occupy the midst thereof.

Ver. 22. From the possession—and from] Beyond the possession—and beyond. Houbigant reads the verse thus, After the possession of the Levites, and after the possession of the city, which shall be in the midst, shall be the portion of the prince; so that the prince may have that which shall be in the midst between the border of Judah, and the border of Benjamin.

Ver. 28. Great sea] Mediterranean sea.

Ver. 29. For inheritance] "Since there is no doubt but that other things which are said in these chapters relating to the temple and the land of Israel are of a prophetic nature, it seems safer to determine, that the abovementioned measures were observed both in building the temple and in assigning the lots to the tribes; though we know not how these things were done, because there is a great chasm in the sacred history from the time of Ezra to that of the Maccabees." Houbigant.

These portions may have been given to some of the twelve tribes, as they returned: and may hereafter be given to such as return when the Jewish people shall be restored to their own land, and who know their tribe either by tradition or by the instruction of inspired prophets.

northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi.

32 And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan.

33 And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one

gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun.

34 At the west side four thousand and five hundred, *with* their three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali.

35 *It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there.*

*Ver. 35. The name of the city, &c. The Lord is there]* *The Lord is its name.* Houbigant. Jerusalem never bore this name; and when it shall be established, according to the idea of Ezekiel, we are not assured that it shall be so named. It is very frequently said in Scripture, that a person or thing shall be called by a certain name, when it is to be invested with qualities which may intitle it to that denomination. Isaiah, foretelling the coming of the Messiah, says, that he shall be called *Emmanuel, Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*, because he was to possess the qualities which should serve as a foundation for all those titles. In like manner, 2 Sam. xii. 25. it is said, that Solomon shall be called *Jedidiah, or the Beloved of God*; and that Jerusalem shall be called *The city of righteousness, the faithful city, the Lord's delight,—Sought out,—A city not forsaken.* Isai. i. 26. lxii. 4. 12. *The Throne of the Lord, &c.* Jer. iii. 17. Not that it was to quit its ancient name, and assume all these; but it was to be crowned with the favours of heaven in such a manner, as to draw upon itself all these honourable titles. Thus the Christian church was to succeed to the honours of Jerusalem, and possess in reality Him who truly causes it to bear the name of *The city of the Lord; The Lord is there*; since Jesus Christ hath promised *to be with it always, even unto the end of the world.* Matt. xxviii. 20. JEHOVAH occasionally protected Jerusalem; he filled it with glory when the Messiah was manifested there; and he will again gloriously manifest himself in this city at its restoration.

The reader, desirous to enter more fully into the description of this temple given in the last chapters of Ezekiel, will find much satisfaction in Scheuchzer's *Physique Sacrée*, tom. vii. where that writer has given several fine delineations of the whole structure. We shall now lay before our readers the following remarks on this part of Ezekiel's prophecy, made by the Rector of Newhaven College in New England. "I suppose (says he) that this vision is a representation of the happy state of the church in the millennium, wherein Christ shall reign; and then all men shall be regenerated and sanctified, when they are very young, and be as good or better than the very best of men are now: that there shall be no wars, vices, or disorders; and men shall spend their whole time in procuring the natural conveniences of life, and in public and private devotion. I suppose that the generality of the Jews, for whom this vision was primarily designed, could not easily conceive of spiritual things, but only by external and visible representations; nor of a happy state of the church, but only by a perfect regulation of their civil government, religion, and worship. They

"are therefore represented to be under the government of a most just and religious king: their country to be divided to the twelve tribes, in lots of a regular and mathematical form; and not confusedly intermixed, as in Joshua's time: their city laid out larger than before, and exactly four-square, with regular suburbs: the temple and appendages much more commodious for their sacrifices, and the habitations of the priests and Levites regularly formed near round about the temple. So that this whole plan of the division of the country, the laying out of city, temple, and all the appendages, appears to be perfectly regular and uniform, as if it was drawn all at one time, and by one hand, who had power to effect it; and therefore conveyed to the Jews the most complete idea they were capable of conceiving of the most perfect church, commonwealth, city, temple, and conveniences for divine worship. I. The Holy Land, as described chap. xlvii. and xlviii. according to the original grant, being about two hundred and fifty miles long, north and south, and about one hundred and fifty miles wide, is divided by parallel lines, east and west, to the twelve tribes; each of them having a portion about twenty miles wide. Only between Judah and Benjamin there is a *holy portion* near ten miles wide, in the middle of which is the *holy oblation*, twenty-five thousand cubits; that is, about ten miles square, for the priests, Levites, city, and temple, ch. xlv. 1. xlviii. 8. The two ends are for the prince, chap. xlv. 7, &c. II. The *holy oblation*, lying in the middle of the holy portion, is twenty-five thousand cubits square, which is near ten miles; of which ten thousand cubits, or four miles, are taken off from the north side for an habitation for the priests, and as much for the Levites on the south side, chap. xlv. 4, 5. and xlviii. 20. and five thousand cubits in the middle for the city portion, chap. xlv. 6. In the middle of which is the city, four thousand five hundred cubits square, which is near two miles, chap. xlviii. 15, 16. Round about this are left two hundred and fifty cubits, near thirty rods, for suburbs, ver. 17. The remaining ten thousand cubits on the east side, and the ten thousand cubits on the west side, are for the profit of those who serve the city out of all the tribes, ver. 18, 19. The sanctuary is in the midst of the city, chap. xlviii. 8. III. The *sanctuary* or temple, with its appendages, was entirely surrounded with a wall six cubits high, and six cubits thick, chap. xl. 5. and five hundred cubits long on each side, chap. xlii. 15, &c. and xlv. 2. In the middle square stands the temple, which was surrounded by a wall one hundred cubits long on each side. chap. xli. 13. and six cubits thick, chap. xli. 6. The side chambers

“ chambers on the outside four cubits, ver. 6. The holy  
 “ of holies, at the west end, was twenty cubits square on  
 “ the inside, ver. 4. The holy place, or outer court, at  
 “ the east end, was forty cubits, ver. 12.; the length of  
 “ the porch on the north side was twenty cubits, the  
 “ breadth eleven cubits, chap. xl. 49. and the width of  
 “ the separate place on the south side, twenty cubits. On  
 “ each side of the temple, towards the four gates, on the  
 “ outer wall, stood two courts, eight in the whole, each  
 “ one hundred cubits square, chap. xl. 19. 23. 27. In  
 “ each of these were thirty-six little chambers or buildings  
 “ about six cubits square, viz. six at the entrance of the  
 “ gate, chap. xl. 7. 17. 20, &c. and thirty on the pave-  
 “ ment, ver. 17, &c. which were for lodgings for the  
 “ priests, for hanging up their garments, and their part  
 “ of the sacrifices, chap. xlii. 13. The places at the four  
 “ corners were for boiling; chap. xlvi. 20—24.”

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, The division of the land, and the position of the several tribes, are very different from what had ever been the case, either under Joshua, or after the Babylonish captivity.

1. Dan, the last provided for, Josh. xix. 40. is here the first; for under the Gospel so it often happens, Matth. xix. 30. and the chief of sinners become the chief of faints.

2. The tribes lay contiguous in a row, mutual supports to each other; signifying the union maintained in the church of Christ between the members, and the mutual assistance which each communicates and receives, for the strengthening and comfort of the whole body.

3. The sanctuary with the Levites lay in the midst; seven tribes were to the north, five to the south of it; thus they might more conveniently meet together, and maintain communion with each other.

4. The portion of the priests was around the temple, that they might be at hand continually; and as they were liberally provided for by the oblations, they were the more obliged to attend at the altar. *Note;* It is the worst of sacrilege, when priests fatten on the spoils of that altar at which they never serve.

5. The lands of the priests were unalienable, and might

neither be sold nor exchanged. What is dedicated to God's service must no more be diverted to other purposes.

6. The city is four-square, and the suburbs equally extending on every side, called the *profane* place, being, in comparison with the sanctuary, common for all the people of the several tribes. This city represents the Gospel-church, in which the faithful are joined together under the government of their great king Jesus.

7. There shall be a number selected out of all the tribes to serve the city; intimating the duty of those who are magistrates, or ministers, or private Christians, to lay out themselves for the advancement of Christ's church and kingdom in the world.

8. The prince's lot is suited to his high dignity, near the sanctuary; as he is designed to be the protector of religion, and the example of true godliness to his subjects. Christ is the church's Prince, her defence, and glory.

9. Judah and Benjamin lay on each side the sanctuary, in the most honourable place. They who kept their integrity, and stood faithful, when others apostatized, shall receive the reward of their fidelity.

2dly, The immense extent of this city, computed by some at 32,000 miles, is supposed by many to be an indubitable evidence that the whole vision is to be considered mystically, as representing that glorious church into which all nations should flow together. The twelve gates bearing the names of the twelve tribes, intimate the freedom of access which all believers have through Jesus, the door into the city of God: none are excluded, who do not exclude themselves. The name which the city bears is יהוה שׁמׁמׁה *Yehovah Shammah*, God in a peculiar manner manifesting his presence in the midst of his church and people here below, preserving them from all their foes: he is near to hear and grant all their petitions; comforting them with a sense of his love, and dwelling in their hearts, now become the habitation of God through the Spirit. And this also will be the consummation of the eternal bliss and glory of the faithful—that *the Lord is there*, shining on his glorified saints with the unclouded beams of everlasting consolation. Blessed and happy they, who enter by the gates into the city, and enjoy that unutterable felicity of being for ever with the Lord.