

REFLECTIONS

ON THE

PROPHETIC WORD

IN THE

Old Testament Scriptures.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE	1
INTRODUCTION	3
ISAIAH. (SALVATION OF JAH)	12
Chapters xiii.-xxvii.	25
Chapters xxviii.-xxxv.	46
Chapters xxxvi.-xxxix.	59
Chapters xl.-xlvi.	64
Chapters xlix.-lvii.	76
Chapters lviii.-lxvi.	91
JEREMIAH. (MAY JAH ESTABLISH)	107
EZEKIEL. (MAY GOD STRENGTHEN)	137
DANIEL. (GOD [IS] MY JUDGE)	171
HOSEA. (HELP, DELIVERANCE)	204
JOEL. (JEHOVAH [IS] GOD)	221
AMOS. (A BEARER)	227
OBADIAH. (SERVANT OF THE LORD)	235
JONAH. (A DOVE)	237
MICAH. (WHO IS LIKE JAH)	243
NAHUM. (COMFORTED)	253
HABAKKUK. (EMBRACE)	255
ZEPHANIAH. (THE LORD PROTECTS)	261
HAGGAI. (FESTIVE)	266
ZECHARIAH. (THE LORD REMEMBERED)	271
MALACHI. (MESSENGER OF THE LORD)	294

PREFACE.

THE following pages were written in response to a request that I would write some "Notes on the Prophets." These notes will not be of interest to any reader who, though a Christian, has not accepted separation from the system of this world, in some measure according to the Lord's desire in saying, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Such a separation would enable them to enter *heartily* into the truth of that sphere of grace and glory of which Christ, once crucified, but now risen and glorified, is the centre—a sphere in which all His glories will shine, whether as "the Son," the appointed Heir of all things; the "Son of David" ruling in Zion; or as "the Son of man" set over the works of God's hands according to His counsel—He being the Creator and Upholder of all things—also the Redeemer and Reconciler, the Lamb of God, who will hand up a new heaven and earth to His God and Father, where God will be all in all.

The *ways of God* leading to that blessed consummation are unfolded in the prophetic

2 REFLECTIONS ON THE PROPHETIC WORD.

word. The fact that the saints forming the assembly are so dearly loved, and so blessedly associated with Christ for eternity, should enable such to study the prophets in the truth of their own calling by the God of all grace to His eternal glory.

I would urge the reader of these notes to study the prophets chapter by chapter. There is not a chapter that does not form a link in the prophetic unfolding of truth. These notes are only intended to be some little help to the understanding of the mind of God in His word.

T. H. R.



REFLECTIONS ON THE PROPHETIC WORD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

INTRODUCTION.

WE have in the Epistles of Peter an inspired exposition of the scope and bearing of the prophetic word. In 1 Peter i. he tells us that the Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets of old testified of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." In his second epistle (chap. i.) he speaks of it "as a light shining in a dark place"—dark, because light already given had been refused. It was the lamp for faith before the dayspring from on high visited the earth. Then Jesus came. While He was in the world He was the light of the world, but the darkness did not comprehend it, but whoever followed Him had the light of life. Now that He has left the world the lamp of prophecy still shines in the dark place from which He has been rejected, not to testify of His sufferings—the gospel does that—

they are past, and He who suffered is glorified, but to testify of His coming glory in His kingdom, and to announce the judgment and end of the world that has rejected Him. While He is in the heavens He is the Morning Star for the church, and thus the hearts of the saints of the present time become illumined with heavenly light, though darkness be around them down here.

Peter adds a further explanation as to prophecy. Many a prophetic word was uttered of old with simple reference to the then state of things, and therefore is not recorded for our learning, but if it be a "prophecy of *scripture*," though it might refer primarily to an event long since past, yet is recorded as forming part of the revelation of the ways of God in securing ultimately His own glory through our Lord Jesus Christ—the Son of His love and the Man of His counsel.

We have another reference to the prophetic word by Paul. He tells us (Rom. i. 2) that the *gospel of God* (to which he had been separated) had by Him been promised afore *by His prophets* in holy writings. Our blessed Lord also connects this gospel concerning Himself, and its proclamation, with that which the prophets had written (Luke xxiv. 44), and in view of His sufferings speaks of the fulfilment of the scripture as that which *must* be. It is interest-

ing also to note that in the Roman epistle, which sets forth the gospel of God, the apostle verifies his statement some forty times by reference to the Old Testament scriptures.

We may now consider the way in which prophecy comes before us as *a distinct testimony* from God. It was in the day of Samuel. Abraham is spoken of as a prophet (Gen. xx. 7), and Moses also (Hosea xii. 13), but in Hebrews xi. 32 Samuel is not mentioned in chronological order, but as standing *at the head of the prophets*. It is well for us then to consider the way in which he is introduced. Moses was not only a prophet, as Deuteronomy xxxii. shews, but also a mediator divinely commissioned to inaugurate a vast system, typical of the thoughts of God for His own glory. His plans for accomplishing those thoughts were unfolded in connection with a people in whom He would be glorified (Isa. xlix. 3): these plans cannot be frustrated. The people themselves were then "after the flesh," hence the relationship between God and them was maintained by priesthood.

In the opening of the Book of Samuel (chap. ii. 12-17) the complete corruption of this priesthood is brought before us, culminating in the ark of God being taken captive, the priests slain, the High Priest, the centre of the system, dies: and "Ichabod" (the glory is de-

parted) pronounced on the nation. Here then is the complete breakdown of the system established on the ground of priesthood.

But before this took place God had been preparing in His mercy for the state of things which was coming in. The weakness and low estate of Israel found its expression in Hannah, wife of a godly Israelite of the Levitical order, a barren and sorrowful woman, whose resource was *in prayer*. That is where Moses had found his resource in the day of Israel's breakdown under law. Prayer is the cry of need, and the utterance of a broken spirit in dependence upon the living God. Hence Samuel (asked of God) comes before us as the answer of God to prayer. A prophet, raised up in grace, but given in answer to prayer, is now *by the ministration of Jehovah's word* the resource for a failed people. It was not yet the introduction of power in the anointed King, but the intervention of God by the testimony of His word for the sustainment of faith until the time came for the kingdom to be established. Though, as always happens, the sure word of God by Samuel was given up by the people for an arm of flesh in Saul, yet in Samuel we learn the place that prophecy holds in the day when the system established by God has failed to uphold His name and glory. It is so with the assembly. It has failed to maintain the light

of a heavenly Christ, and the word of God then has the character of the testimony of Jesus, for "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." It might have been thought that prophecy was a testimony of certain events and dealings of God about to take place, especially as they were communicated by an angel, and not directly to John by the Holy Spirit, but "Jesus," to whom every knee must bow, was *the Spirit* of the prophetic word.

Another point is of importance, that prophecy (as the term is usually applied, and as we are now considering it) always refers *to the earth*, and reveals God's thoughts in connection with the special sphere of His dealing, though when He rises up to the judgment written the whole habitable world will be involved in it. In the New Testament there is a sense in which prophecy is used as "*forth-telling*" the mind of God rather than *foretelling*. The prophets of the New Testament were, so to speak, the mouthpiece of God's present communications to the saints, presenting to them the bearing of Christ's redemption and of His present place in glory.

Another remark is needful as to the Old Testament prophets. God spoke to His people through them, viewing His people in two positions. One, when they still held before

Him the place of His people, established in His land. The prophets then addressed the word of God at their mouth *to* the people. Secondly, when they are contemplated as in captivity and scattered from their land, then the prophetic word is *not* addressed *to* them, but is a revelation of God's dealings *in regard to them* when under His judgment, and captives among the nations. He uses the judgment for chastening and to bring about the ultimate blessing of the exercised remnant. (Jer. xxiv. 5.) The second section of Isaiah (chaps. xiii.—xxvii.) is an illustration, as regarding them prophetically in that position, while Daniel views them as *actually* in it.

God is true and faithful, and hence always speaks to or of His people *where they are*. He could not do otherwise, for He is a God of truth. Jeremiah prophesied at the critical moment when the sin of Manasseh brought about Israel's captivity. Spite of all appearances and false prophets, he maintained the testimony of God. Ezekiel and Daniel held a peculiar position, both were in captivity when they prophesied, and viewed things from a standpoint outside of Jerusalem and the land. The former, being a priest, views the people as those in whose midst Jehovah had placed *the sanctuary* of His glory. In vision he sees the glory depart and Jerusalem destroyed, and

records the return of the divine glory to the temple rebuilt, according to divine pattern, in the last days. Daniel, who was probably of the royal line, speaks of the times of the Gentiles. Himself a captive in Nebuchadnezzar's palace, he is given to see the whole course of Gentile supremacy, the government of the world having passed into their hands when *the throne* of God at Jerusalem was cast down through His displeasure. Thus the *sanctuary* and the *throne* of Jehovah ceased in Jerusalem.

At the present time we are accustomed to see constant change in the distribution of power and territory. While the Christian owns the overruling hand of God's providence in that which transpires, yet he knows that the orderings of God *now* have the gospel of His grace in view; there is long-suffering mercy, but no *direct* assumption of the government of the world. The Book of Revelation unfolds the action of the throne in heaven when the time comes for the rejected Lord to take the inheritance. *The earth* is to be filled with the glory of the Lord, and of this the Old Testament prophets spoke: they also tell of the Gentile powers as well as hostile Jews being arrayed against Jehovah and His Anointed. How then do we regard the word of prophecy? Is it nothing that the place of

His sanctuary and glory is in the dust? nothing that the city and land in which Jesus walked and then suffered is trodden down by the Gentile? See what the Lord felt when He spoke of Jerusalem being laid low, even with the ground. He wept over it. (Luke xix. 41-44.) And again, hear Jeremiah, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Chap. ix. 1.) Note also the deep feeling which the sense of Israel's departure from Jehovah produced in Isaiah. (Chap. i.)

In concluding this introduction, I would refer again to 1 Peter i. 12. There we read that the prophets of old searched their own writings to know what the Spirit of Christ in them signified. It was not for themselves, but *to us* they ministered the things now reported to us by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. The necessity of Messiah suffering, and of His taking His place in heaven, the securing of all God's purposes *in a heavenly Christ*, they did not understand, their horizon was bounded—not so ours, now that the Holy Spirit has come from a glorified Christ (John xvi. 14, 15); though perhaps we may but little apprehend it. In the New Testament there is nothing which the Spirit communicated through elect vessels which was not the present enjoyed portion of

the vessel, as well as of the saints for whom they wrote it. The glories of Christ are the present joy of the saints, though we wait for the full fruition.

I might remark that occasionally God gave the prophets of old by some outward dealing to realise the solemnity of the words they spoke (see Jer. xiii. 1-11; Ezek. iv. 1-8), but this was not the same experience as the Holy Spirit unfolding to the saints what is involved in the sorrows and sufferings and death of Christ, and of their association with Him in heavenly glory, so that they come with Him in His kingdom.



ISAIAH (SALVATION OF JAH).

ISAIAH stands out pre-eminently at the beginning of the prophetic word. In confirmation of this we may call to mind the numerous references to his prophecy in the New Testament—there are about sixty-five quotations or allusions by the Lord and the inspired writers. His prophecy is concerning Judah and Jerusalem, the place of God's sanctuary and throne; but as regards the people, conscience was dead as to God Himself. They are thus addressed: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity" (chap. i. 4); and the daughter of Zion is represented by "a very small remnant," left to them by the Lord of hosts in the midst of coming desolations, and thus Paul's statement "that they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. ix. 6) is verified. Yet the sinful nation brought to Jehovah "a multitude of sacrifices," which the prophet designates as "vain oblations." The prophetic word brings the eye of God to bear upon the hidden springs of evil, detecting the departure of the heart from the living God. It is this forsaking of God (chap. lxxv. 11) which gives occasion for the word of prophecy, so as to bring God into the conscience, if possible.

Hence Jehovah by the prophet pleads with

the sinful nation. He bids them "cease to do evil" and "learn to do well"; that would be the mark of true repentance and of turning to God. Such would be "Zion's converts." To them the glad tidings are addressed: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Thus *the nation* is first addressed; then *the city* comes into review: "How is the faithful city become an harlot!" Once known as the "city of God" (Psa. xlviii. 1), it had been unfaithful to Him. The princes, the rulers in His city, are His adversaries. Terrible thought! But He does not surrender His rights. He will avenge Himself of His enemies, and purge away the dross. We shall find later on that the Assyrian power is the special instrument of God's chastening hand. Afterwards it should be called "the city of righteousness, the faithful city," but there would be the complete destruction of those who were sinners, and of those who forsook Jehovah.

Chapter i. thus forms the preface, and opens out the subject of the prophecy. The first section (chaps. i.-xii.) treats of the sinfulness of the people while in God's land and city, and of His chastening hand upon them in consequence. The close of chapter i. and the beginning of

chapter ii. carry on our thoughts from the then present dealings of Jehovah in judgment *to the last days*. There will be a time when judgment will have its *full* effect. The branches will no more be lopped, but the tree will be cut down. At the same time, blessing will flow without hindrance. To this *consummation* prophecy always looks. The nations then will learn war no more: instead, they will flow to the mountain of the Lord's house, to learn His ways and walk in His paths. This was His purpose when He placed His name in Jerusalem and established His throne and sanctuary there. None but Jehovah could accomplish this, and the house of Israel is invited to walk in His light. Instead, they listened to soothsayers, and their land was *full of idols*.

The *day of the Lord* would deal with this; the unclean spirit of idolatry will then have returned to that "wicked generation" with sevenfold power. Chapters ii. 10 and iii. unfold this dealing of the day of the Lord, not only with the nations, but also with Israel and Zion. The *direct government* of God will accompany the day of the Lord. What is man when God arises to shake terribly the earth? His breath is in his nostrils. But judgment, while it clears away the evil, is in view of blessing. Hence in chapter iv. the Branch of the Lord (Christ) is introduced—

“beautiful and glorious” for those escaped from judgment, yet chastened thereby—the remnant who are written among the living in Jerasalem. (Psa. lxxxvii. 5, 6.) As the cloud was spread over Israel in the desert, and in the day of the Lord’s transfiguration overshadowed Peter, James and John, so will the glory tabernacle over mount Zion and her assemblies. Thus the promise of coming glory and blessing is given to sustain the faith of the remnant.

But now the Branch of Jehovah—the Well-beloved—having been introduced, the prophetic Spirit utters a song in regard to the Well-beloved’s vineyard. (Chap. v.) God had brought a vine out of Egypt. (Psa. lxxx. 8.) In Isaiah’s day it brought forth no fruit for God—nothing but wild grapes. Hence the place of greatest privilege became the place of greatest judgment. (Luke xii. 48.) It will be thus with Christendom also. From verse 8 and onward the wild grapes are set forth. It is a solemn thing when God has thus to convict His people, and to bring nations *from afar* as the instruments of His judgment upon *them*, the result being that their land will become full of darkness and sorrow, with no light from heaven. It is judicial darkness where once the light had been, and no judgment can be more terrible.

In chapter vi. the Wellbeloved is seen to be

Jehovah Himself; this we learn from John xii. 40, 41, where verse 10 of this chapter is quoted. The conviction of Israel here is not on the ground of man's *responsibility* (as in chap. v.), but *in the light of God's glory* shining in His sanctuary—that which He had established among His people—how does man look? The seraphim say, “Holy, holy, holy,” and the prophet says, “Woe is me! for I am undone.” In Romans iii. the conviction of man is twofold in character: first, “all have sinned”; they have utterly failed in their responsibility to God; but also, they have “come short of *the glory of God*.” When the veil was rent at the death of Christ, then man's position was before God without the screen of a veil, and he was discovered to be not only a guilty, but *a lost, undone* sinner. While the seraphim veiled their faces, Isaiah found himself, without a veil, in the presence of Jehovah's holy glory. The word seraph means a burning one. “Our God is a consuming fire,” but the seraph takes a burning coal *from the altar*, where the victim had been consumed, and Isaiah's iniquity is taken away and not judged in him, his sin is purged. He is now fitted and ready to be sent to the people, and to utter the judgment of judicial darkness upon them—a judgment not fully executed until Israel had refused the softened

rays of the divine light that shone in Jesus, and not in burning seraphim (John xii.), and had refused the Holy Ghost's witness to the glorified Son of man in heaven. (Acts vii. 57, 58 and xxviii. 25-27.) The cry of "How long?" is the cry of faith and patience often found in the Psalms. In Psalm lxxiv. 9, when at their last extremity, the remnant say, "There is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long." Our blessed Lord gives us in Luke xviii. 1-8 a divine commentary as to the faith that utters this cry, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint," and adds, "Shall not God avenge his own elect . . . though he *bear long* with them?" Yet, as in the day of Psalm lxxiv., He further says, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" In Isaiah vi. the answer to this cry is twofold. Judicial darkness continues until the land is utterly desolate; but "the tenth" (the tithe that belonged to Jehovah), "the holy seed," should be the substance of the nation restored in mercy.

In chapters vii.-ix. 7 a figurative history is given us. A confederacy had been formed against *the house of David*—represented then by Ahaz—a king of whom it was said that "he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord." His idolatry was "the ruin of him and of all Israel." Still, before the

Lord, Ahaz represented the house of David and is addressed as such. He is alarmed at the confederacy. Isaiah, with his son Shear-jashub (*"the remnant shall return,"* though the nation may be judged), is sent to meet Ahaz. This child of the prophet was a sign from the Lord to Ahaz. The object of the confederates was to set up a king, not of the house of David, in Judah—one who would be confederate with themselves. In this we have the foreshadowing of Antichrist; but Jehovah's word to Ahaz was, "It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass"; at the same time saying, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Ahaz is then invited to ask of the Lord a sign. The flesh can be pious outwardly when there is no faith inwardly, and Ahaz says, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord." Would his asking a sign have wearied the Lord? The Lord answers, and gives the sign, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (God with us). There is nothing of human strength in this introduction of Immanuel, but it becomes the sustainment of faith when the confederacies of men threaten Immanuel's land. (Chap. viii. 9, 10.) Thus in Ahaz we have the natural line of the house of David utterly unable to lay hold of the intervention of God in the promise of Immanuel; and the Lord

brings the Assyrian, to whom Ahaz had looked for help, upon him and his people.

In chapter viii. another son is born to the prophet, his name signifying "Swift for spoil, hasty for prey." It is a prophetic child, and his name is recorded in the presence of witnesses in a roll. It is a sign of the character of the Assyrian who would make an inroad into the land, reaching even to the neck; and his might, instead of God's protection, overshadowing the breadth of it. The people as well as their king refused the waters of Shiloah, the promise of Immanuel; but Isaiah, speaking for the remnant, addresses the confederacy of nations, Asshur or Assyria being one of them (Psa. lxxxiii. 3-8): "Associate yourselves . . . and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together . . . and it shall not stand: for *God is with us.*" Their counsel was to cut off Israel from being a nation. (Psa. lxxxiiij. 4.) But Jehovah had associated His name with that people, and its hope lies in Immanuel and in the remnant who know the meaning of His name. Jehovah instructs Isaiah (representing the remnant) not to walk "in the way of this people" ready to follow the way of the world and make a confederacy against the enemy; as it has been said to us: If there be a party in evil, it must not be met by a party against the evil; but Jehovah's word is, "Sanctify

Jehovah of hosts himself," He is the sure resource of faith, "and he shall be for a sanctuary," while Immanuel would be a stumbling-block to both the houses of Israel. (1 Pet. ii. 8.)

Isaiah then speaks in the name of Immanuel: "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among *my* disciples." We have such a moment in Matthew xvi. The Lord gives the religious leaders of the unbelieving nation the sign of coming judgment, as in the case of Jonas, but there He does not refer to *His own* death and resurrection—they did not believe in Him, and "*he left them and departed*"; solemn judgment! Then, *with His disciples*, is revealed the truth of His person, together with the resources they had in Him.

As to Isaiah it was a time of patient waiting on Jehovah—while looking for Him who hid His face from the house of Jacob. He speaks in the name of Immanuel. Meanwhile, the children which the Lord had given to the prophet ("the remnant shall return"—that was sure; and "making haste to the prey" was equally sure) were for signs and wonders in Israel from Jehovah of Hosts, whose characteristic was: "He dwelleth in Zion." (Psa. ii. 6; cxxxii. 13.) It is the mount of grace. The quotation of part of verse 18 in Hebrews ii. 13 shews us how completely the Lord, Immanuel,

identified the remnant of His day with Himself as being "all of one." This remnant became the assembly of the many brethren, the sons that God is bringing to glory; while Israel have been given up for a season, and, like King Saul of old, seek to Satanic agencies instead of to their God. Think of the blindness with which the living seek to the dead for light! The prophet adds, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word"—for them there is no daybreak. The chapter ends in utter darkness and anguish, the people cursing their king (apostate Ahaz, figure of Antichrist) and their God.

But in chapter ix. the light breaks in the midst of darkness. Two chastisements by the enemy are referred to, the second being the more "grievous." They anticipate the two attacks of the Assyrian in the last days (chaps. xxviii. and xxix.); the people sitting in darkness are visited by the light, the light of Jesus, Immanuel (Matt. iv. 16), but the nation did not then own Him as the "Son born to us"; hence the prophecy goes on to the future. As often, in prophecy, what we call the first and second coming of Christ are regarded as one whole. He presented Himself in the way of testimony at His first coming, and by its reception *we* have:—

“ as heavenly light,
What soon shall be our part.”

He comes the second time in glory and power. The righteous remnant will then say, “*Unto us a son is given.*” God will multiply this remnant into a nation and increase its joy, and the oppressor will be destroyed. Micah v. 2, 5 shews that He who was born in Bethlehem will be the peace when the Assyrian enters the land. Not only will the oppressor be destroyed as in the day of Midian (Psa. lxxxiii. 9), but the government shall be on His shoulder, whose name is “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Father of eternity, The Prince of Peace.” He will uphold the *throne of David* (debased by Ahaz) with *judgment and righteousness* for ever. (Compare 2 Sam. viii. 15.)

From verse 8 to the end of chapter x. the subject of chapter v. is resumed, the sinful conduct which brought chastisement after chastisement upon the people, with the words again and again repeated: “For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” (Chaps. v. 25; ix. 12, 17, 21; x. 4.) Then in verse 5 the Assyrian is addressed as the rod of God’s anger, and the staff in their hand His *indignation*, a technical word used for the consummation of God’s judgment on the people

that forsook Him (vers. 22, 23, 25; Dan. viii. 19), "an hypocritical nation, and the people of my wrath"; Jehovah used this rod to cut off "Jerusalem and her idols." In the last days Antichrist will lead them into idolatry, and the power that then occupies the territory of the ancient Assyrian will be the rod of God's anger, and the "indignation" will cease in his destruction. During this time the returned remnant will stay themselves on the Holy One of Israel, and they are characterised as "My people that dwelleth in Zion." Verses 28-34 prophetically describe the march of the Assyrian against Jerusalem, he reaches Nob and shakes his hand against Jerusalem and then comes to his end. Daniel xi. 41-45 describes the march of this same power in the last days.

Chapter xi. needs no comment. It is the reign of Him who has sprung from the root of Jesse (it does not here say root of David); this carries our thoughts back to the days of Samuel, when the prophet had to refuse seven of his (Jesse's) sons (who represented Israel according to the flesh, 1 Sam. xvi. 10), and to anoint *the elect* shepherd-youth. (Ver. 12; Psa. lxxviii. 70). *Here* the Branch out of Jesse's root is anointed by the Spirit of Jehovah in a sevenfold plenitude. Government is on *His* shoulder, and the earth will be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the

sea. In that day *Jehovah* will recover the remnant of His people from the places where they had been driven—the *outcasts* of Israel and the *dispersed* of Judah. (Matt. xxiv. 31.) It will be as when Israel went up out of Egypt, the sea fled and Jordan was driven back. (Psa. cxiv.) Hence in chapter xii. there is the song of *praise*, but not the song of *triumph* as at the Red Sea of old. It is a more chastened utterance of praise and thanksgiving to the God of their salvation. They who had known the chastenings of *Jehovah* will with joy draw water from the wells of salvation. *Jah, Jehovah*, had returned to Zion in the sovereignty of mercy. The remnant who had returned to Zion (chap. x. 24) and the outcast and dispersed remnant brought back (chap. xi. 12) sing to *Jehovah* who had done such excellent things.



CHAPTERS XIII.—XXVII.

THESE chapters form the second section of Isaiah's prophecy. In them another phase of Israel's history comes before us, consequent on their having had links with the nations around; and these links bring about the day of the Lord in another aspect from that which we have considered. It is not the scourge upon Israel in their own land, but the overthrow of all the nations that have had to do with Israel, and of Israel as a nation among them. We read in Numbers xxiii. 9, where Balaam is forced to utter the mind of God as to Israel, "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and *shall not be reckoned among the nations.*" In accord with this, Isaiah speaks of the Wellbeloved fencing (or "making a wall about," margin) his vineyard. (Chap. v. 2). Then in Psalm lxxx. 12 we read, "Why hast thou broken down her hedges?" While Psalm cvi. 35 speaks of their being "mingled among the nations" when they were in the land of promise. Further, we have their desire expressed to Samuel, "Make us a king to judge us *like all the nations.*" (1 Sam. viii. 5.) Hosea also, who prophesied at the same time as Isaiah,

speaks of Israel thus, "Now shall they be *among the nations* as a vessel wherein is no pleasure." Consequently we find in this portion of Isaiah's prophecy, where we have the judgment of Babylon—"the glory of kingdoms"—and of other nations—indeed of the whole earth, that Israel is judged among them. (Chap. xxii.) The death of Samson, a Nazarite unfaithful to his separation to Jehovah (and such was Israel, and, alas, the church also), pictures to us the judgment which he drew down upon himself and his Gentile captors. So will it be with Israel and the nations. The Book of Revelation opens out the judgment consequent on the professing church having become allied with the world power.

It is not the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar which is before us in chapters xiii., xiv.; at the time of the prophecy power had not been transferred by Jehovah from Israel to Babylon's king as the head of Gentile supremacy. It is rather the moral characteristics of Babylon which are presented to us—the city built by the pride and power of man in contrast to the city of God. Babel was its beginning, the effort of *men to exalt themselves* in independence of God. This effort was confounded by the judgment of God. Nations are the outcome of that judgment. But *one man* arises, Nimrod, who began to be *a mighty one in the*

earth; the beginning of his kingdom was Babel. But Jehovah was *the Lord God of Shem*. *His blessing* was with that family. (Gen. ix. 26.) Nimrod was of the generation of Ham. Babylon had the character of "the oppressor": the one who smote the peoples (chap. xiv. 4-6); the "hammer of the whole earth" (Jer. l. 23); and is further addressed as assuming the title of Christ, "Lucifer, son of the morning" (Lucifer means the morning star). But the authority of Babylon is represented as that of a "*star fallen from heaven*." Power or authority is "from above." In Babylon it is debased and consequently the power fallen from heaven exalts ITSELF and essays to lift up its throne above the stars of God, and it assumed to itself the insolent right to sit on the mount of the congregation on the sides of the north—the place of King Messiah. (Psa. xlviii. 2.) It would ascend above the heights of the clouds—that is where Christ now is—and assume universal dominion as Most High over all the earth! It is brought down to the sides of the pit.

In Revelation xvii.-xviii. the full-blown character of that which began at Babel is given us—man glorifying himself, and unmoved by the testimony of a humbled Christ, the One who humbled Himself to the death of the cross. The professing church, having had

such a testimony, has become a harlot dressed in the splendour of the world, and sits upon a scarlet-coloured beast full of names of blasphemy, the last form of Gentile power. How has it *fallen from the heavenly places* !

Babylon of old laid waste and absorbed both Jerusalem and Tyre—they ceased to be rivals of her pride and power. Now Tyre had said of Jerusalem, when it was overthrown, “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.” (Ezek. xxvi. 2.) The peoples entered the gates of Jerusalem as the *city of God*, while Tyre was “the *mart* of the nations”—the market of the world. Those attracted to the city of God bent their steps to Jerusalem ; those who wanted the glories and luxuries of the world would trade with Tyre. What was to be bought in Jerusalem should have been without money and without price. It was not so. She became as the nations, and went captive to Babylon. Tyre also was given into the hand of Babylon’s king. In the mystic Babylon of Revelation we find that which should have been a dweller in heaven had fallen into idolatrous association with the world, combined with the characteristics of Tyre. (Compare Ezek. xxvii. with Rev. xviii.) Babylon of old and the Babylon of Revelation perish for ever. Isaiah speaks

of the former, and the Apostle John of the doom of the latter, whether as harlot or city.

But mercy comes to Israel (Isa. xiv. 1-3), and in the end "they shall take them captives, whose captives they were." Ephesians iv. 8 is an allusion to this passage. Christ has ascended on high, having "led captivity captive." Christ has overcome the world and its prince. The world is the place where Babylon flourishes, but the place of tribulation to the saint; Christ on high has sent down the Holy Ghost that all the grace of heaven might be the portion of the church. Israel still waits for the Spirit to be poured out from on high (chap. xxxii. 15), and the call to come out of Babylon in Revelation xviii. 4, "Come out of her, my people," is doubtless to the remnant of Israel in the last day, though in principle it applies to any who have been beguiled by her splendour, but have ears to hear.

That the prophecy refers to the last days is evident, for in chapter xiv. 24 the Assyrian, who historically succumbed to Babylon, is broken in *Jehovah's land* after Babylon is brought down to the pit. This is confirmed by Daniel xi. 45; the king of the north who will then reign in the country of Assyria "will plant the tabernacles of his palace . . . in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him."

Philistia, a nation that always disputed the territory God had given to Israel, is next judged. "Rejoice not thou, Philistia [so it should be read], all of thee, because the rod that smote thee is broken." I presume that Israel is referred to as "the rod," and the Philistines rejoice because of Israel's breach, but their doom would come from the north. (Comp. Jer. xlvii. 1, 2; Ezek. xxv. 15-17; Zeph. ii. 4-7.) When all these nations fall, the mountain that the Lord has founded, mount Zion, remains, and the poor remnant when everything is tottering shall trust in it. What an answer to the messengers of the nations! (Comp. Psa. lxxxvii.)

Moab (chaps. xv., xvi.) is next addressed, its character is given, and *represents to us*, I judge, that phase of the world which settles down in ease and in the pride of prosperity. It was a fertile country, but its fertility would vanish. Israel's prosperity depended upon their obedience to Jehovah. Moab depended upon the natural resources of their country. Two things are demanded of Moab by the prophetic Spirit. First, to send tribute to the *ruler of the land . . . the mount of the daughter of Zion*. This is an allusion to 2 Kings iii. 4, 5. Not Ahab, but the ruler in Zion was to be owned. Secondly, the prosperous world was to hide Jehovah's outcasts and not betray them. The prophetic word here further regards Israel as

outcasts among the nations. It was when a famine had driven out Elimelech and Naomi from their inheritance in Israel that they went to sojourn in the land of Moab. (Ruth i.) And again, it was when David was a wanderer and outcast that he committed his father and mother to the king of Moab. (1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4.) Tradition says that the king of Moab betrayed his trust. The prosperous, easy-going world is judged. Its blessing lay in owning the throne of David.

In chapter xvii. Damascus is judged, and with it *Ephraim*, who had been confederate with Damascus or Syria (chap. vii. 2) *against the house of David*. The children of *Israel* are before the mind of the Spirit here; they had never been very true to the house of David (see 2 Sam. xx. 1), and though sharing in the glory of Solomon's reign, yet they departed from Rehoboam and relied on kings of their own choosing. While Ahaz, the king of the house of David, was preserved by God from this confederacy, yet we read that his people rejoiced in Rezin and Remaliah's son; they were willing to be confederate with Syria and Samaria. What have the people of God to do with the world? If they confederate with the world they are judged with the world. *Damascus* becomes a ruinous heap and the *glory of Jacob* is made thin; yet gleanings are

left, and in *that day* a man will look to his Maker and have respect to the Holy One of Israel, and not look to the altars (1 Kings xii. 25-33), the work of his hands. His *strong cities* also shall be as a forsaken bough, and there shall be desolation. The nation is then addressed, "Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation *therefore shalt thou plant* pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips," but the harvest would flee in the day of taking possession and the sorrow be incurable. The end of chapter xvii. describes the means by which all the strange slips are destroyed, but when God's work is effected, the rushing nations are but as the chaff before the wind. We find the same spirit in Christendom at the close, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." This is the setting of strange slips and pleasant plants by that which bears the name of church, for all is without Christ.

In chapter xviii. another power comes before us who meddles with God's people—it is an attempt to reinstate them in their land, but it is not of Jehovah. It is some maritime power that will overshadow them with its protection, but it is not "the Lord God of Israel" under whose wings they are gathered; nor is it a power that belonged to the system of nations around Israel, but one *beyond* the rivers of

Ethiopia—the Nile and Euphrates. All the world is summoned to behold that which is being done; meanwhile the Lord takes no action, but rests and considers in His dwelling-place. It will probably be some bold stroke of policy to put the people back in their land, unrepentant as they are. When all seems prosperous and about to bear fruit it is cut down and left to the fowls of the mountains and the beasts of the earth—the Gentile powers. It will be the terrible time of Jacob's trouble; but in that time the scattered and peeled nation are brought as a present to the place of the name of Jehovah of Hosts, the mount Zion. (Chaps. lx. 8, 9; lxvi. 20.)

Chapter xix. is the judgment of Egypt. Egypt represents to us morally the wisdom of the world with its antiquity and great resources. "How say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?" No doubt its invasion by Nebuchadnezzar is before the vision of the prophet, but chapter xx. carries us on to an invasion by the Assyrian at the end. (Compare Dan. xi. 42, 43.) Jehovah sets the Egyptians against the Egyptians—such a kingdom cannot stand. In chapters xxx., xxxi. Egypt is looked at as the country where Israel went for help, but its resources entirely fail as well as its spirit. Egypt shall be like women, it shall be afraid because of the shaking

of the hand of the Lord of Hosts. There was a moment of old when Egypt's wise men had to say, "This is the finger of God." (Exo. viii. 19.) The Assyrian is but the instrument in Jehovah's hand. It is beautiful to see that both Assyria and Egypt are restored, Israel being a third with them. The boasting of Pharaoh is over; Jehovah shall be known in Egypt and the Egyptians shall know Jehovah. They with Assyria and Israel in their respective spheres are blessed of Him.

In chapter xxi. Babylon is again before us as "the desert of the sea." We have seen it before in its pride and infidel self-exaltation. Here it is its character under the eye of God—a desert, a place of desolation, and yet as the sea, whose troubled waves cast up mire and dirt, and Babylon sinks in its waters. (Compare Jer. li. 42, 43; Rev. xviii. 21.) So here we have its judgment by the Medes and Persians. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the *graven images of her gods* he hath broken unto the ground." Belshazzar and his festal company were profaning the vessels taken from God's temple, and "drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." On that very night the judgment was executed. In this we see how self-exaltation and degrading idolatry go together. (Compare Rev. ix. 20.)

The burden of Edom (Dumah, or Idumea) follows. We find in Psalm cxxxvii. Edom and Babylon are together in judgment. Here, a voice comes from Seir, "Watchman, what of the night?" The night of judgment was overtaking the Gentile powers, and Edom sarcastically asks as to it from its fancied rock of security. It is the infidel, scornful spirit of the world set forth in Edom. The Watchman of Israel says, "The morning cometh." The Sun of righteousness is about to rise. Poor world! Where will then be your scorn? There is no scornful reply from the watchman. "If ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come." Come and share the rising of the dayspring upon Israel. (Compare Rev. xxii. 17.) The chapter concludes with the desolation of the wandering tribes of Arabia.

I think it must be evident that the title given to Jerusalem, "The valley of vision," stands in contrast to "The desert of the sea." Two mystical names applied to the two cities: the one, the city of man's building; the other, "the city of God" and of His king. At the time of the vision Hezekiah (the strength of Jah), a true son of David, had replaced the apostate Ahaz. His history, as typical of the events of the last days, is given in chapters xxxvi.-xxxix., but here we have the prophetic unfolding of God's judgment as *to the state of*

His people, at a time of prosperity which they enjoyed because Hezekiah had honoured the Lord and trusted in Him. The city was full of stirs, a joyous city, but the prophet foresaw the day of the spoiling of God's people. That which had been an outward sign of prudence in the midst of prosperity (2 Chron. xxxii. 27-30), the Seer of God proclaims to be want of confidence in God, ending in perplexity. "Ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago." To the eye of faith "the builder and maker" of Jerusalem was God. (Compare Heb. xi. 10.) Isaiah speaks as one who "saw the vision of the Almighty," He "who calls things that be not as though they were." We may be sure, if God is the Maker and Fashioner, that the moral foundations of the city are eternally secure. In Psalm ii. Zion is called the hill of God's *holiness*, and in chapter lxi. 10 Jerusalem speaks thus: "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the *robe of righteousness*." "The pure-gold like unto clear glass" of the New Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 21) is symbolic of "truthful righteousness and holiness."

The state of the people as before God called for weeping and mourning and girding with sackcloth. Instead there was the infidel spirit, which said, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow

we shall die." Jehovah's word to them was that they should die. Moreover, Shebna, who was over *the house of David*, but cared for his own glory, should go into captivity; and Eliakim (God shall establish), a type of Christ as Shebna of Antichrist, takes the administration of the house of David, and all the glory of that house is on Eliakim's shoulders—that is, on Christ's—while that which depended for stability on man's pride and self-importance should fall.

Of Tyre (chap. xxiii.) I have spoken. I would merely add that at the close Tyre comes into remembrance again. Her merchandise shall be holy to Jehovah; instead of being laid up for her own glory, it "shall be for them that dwell before Jehovah, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing." So the Apostle Paul speaks to Timothy, "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content." The merchandise of this world's glory will be of no account when Jesus reigns.

In chapter xxiv. the scene of God's dealings widens out to *the whole earth*, the whole system of the earth is convulsed and broken down. In verse 17 the expression "O inhabitant" (not of this country or of that, but) "of the earth" is used, coupled with the same words that are said of Moab (Jer. xlviii. 43): "Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee." We have already seen that Moab was a people who were

at ease, settled on their lees, morally "dwellers upon earth." While of God's people Moses wrote, "Lord, thou hast been *our dwelling place* in all generations." (Psa. xc. 1.) Our Lord gives the moral characteristics of these dwellers on the face of the whole earth (Luke xxi. 34, 35), and the day of the Lord overtaking them as a snare. In the former part of our chapter (vers. 1, 4, 5, 6), "the earth" is doubtless the land of Israel's possession; it was defiled under the inhabitants thereof; every title under which they held it was violated. So Jehovah made it waste, and turned it upside down; but Israel was but the central part of a larger sphere of God's special dealings, and this larger and special sphere has the title of "the earth"—an ordered scene with which prophecy specially deals, while there is the tumultuous mass of nations—the sea—outside. Verses 19, 20 shew the utter overthrow of this earthly system which morally refuses the light of heaven. As part of this system we have the term in verse 10, "the city of confusion." Babylon answers to the title, but it is not named. The Spirit fixes our thoughts on the fact that *the city of the inhabitants of the earth* is a city of confusion, broken up, and the houses empty (comp. Rev. xvi. 18 for this universal convulsion), while in Psalm xlviii. 2, 3, 12-14 we have the

order and beauty and stability of the city of God. But not only shall *the earth* reel to and fro, for in that day Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high (Rev. xii. 7, 9), and the *kings of the earth* upon the earth (Rev. xvi. 14; xix. 19, 20.) The ordinances of the heavens pale before the glory of Jehovah of hosts reigning in mount Zion, and that which the ancients looked for is accomplished.

The judgment of the nations and of guilty Israel among them has brought us to the reign of Jehovah of hosts—that is, of Christ. The setting aside of all the power of man makes way for God to come in. His purpose to stain all the pride of glory has been accomplished. That which lifted itself up has been brought down to hell. There are two ways in which deliverance comes to the saints of God. The one is by their being taken up out of it. The saints of the assembly will be caught up to the Lord out of all the evil of the days we have been considering. It is so spiritually now. Resurrection power places the saint *in Christ*, and makes him to know even now a home that evil cannot reach. The other way of deliverance is that which is realised here—the complete overthrow of the power of Satan, and of the system of this world which he has built up in opposition to God. The overthrow of the

nations of Canaan by Joshua, and the driving back of Jordan was the defeat in that day of Satan's power, whether in death or in rebellious man. Here we have the system of nations in the last day, but, alas! Israel among them. In chapter xxv. the prophet now speaks in the name of the remnant, the true Israel of God: "Jehovah, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will celebrate thy name." His counsels of old are found to be yea and amen—faithfulness and truth. All that is high is brought low, and the poor and needy remnant find their refuge in Him. Note how easily all is done, as when the *shadow of a cloud* intervenes to protect from heat. Such is Jehovah's way of power in bringing low "the branch of the terrible ones."

And in *this mountain*—mount Zion, where Jehovah reigns—shall be a feast which Jehovah prepares for all peoples. All share in the blessing now brought in. It is as when David placed the ark on mount Zion; he dealt to the whole multitude a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh and a flagon of wine. Only here it extends to all peoples when Christ reigns on Zion. From all nations and peoples the darkening influence which Satan had spread over them shall be removed. The assembly was set, when Christ went on high, as the vessel of heavenly light in the earth, and John

speaks of it thus, "the darkness is passing and the true light now shineth." Satan's power in idolatry among the nations fell before the light of Christ in the saints. It was for a time anticipative of that which is brought to pass here. But Christendom (as Christianity became) settled down in the place where Satan's throne was (Rev. ii. 13), and the public light waned, even as the light for Jehovah on the earth had waned in Israel, and Satan's darkening influence will again be felt in apostate Judaism and apostate Christendom. (Rev. ix.) The coming of Christ removes the veil.

But more; at that time is brought to pass the saying, "Death is swallowed up in victory." (Ver. 8; 1 Cor. xv. 54.) The passage here must refer to the saints of the past, even as Paul speaks of Christians.

Moreover, tears are wiped away, and the reproach of His people is taken from the earth. They can now say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited *for him*, and HE will save us." There is no more looking to Egypt or to man for help. They have found it "better to trust in Jehovah than to put confidence in man." They will be glad and rejoice in His salvation. (Compare Psal. cxviii. 14-16.) In the mountain of Zion shall the hand of Jehovah rest, and Moab, that which is at ease and settled on the earth without God, is brought to the dust.

Now comes the song in the land of Judah, "We have a strong city" (Psa. xxxi. 19-21); it is a city *upon earth*, and hence it needs "salvation for walls and bulwarks." The holy city on high has its walls radiant with glory, it is where salvation is no longer needed. The gates of Zion open to the righteous nation, they had first opened to the King of glory (Psa. xxiv. 7-10); now to the righteous who praise Jehovah (Psa. cxviii. 19)—the nation which keeps the truth as against Satan's lie. No liar enters the heavenly city. (Rev. xxi. 27.) In sorrow they had learned to trust Him, now they are in the peace of Jehovah's presence in Zion. The "constant mind" is stayed there, for in Jah Jehovah is the Rock of Ages. All that is lofty He has laid low.

Now is the day when righteousness may be learned in the blessed atmosphere of grace, but in that day the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness through Jehovah's judgments. Favour had been shewn to the wicked—now is the day of grace—yet would he not learn righteousness. *We* have learnt it in the *cross of Jesus*. Blessed be God! His hand was *there* lifted up in judgment. After the day of grace it is lifted up on the unjust. It was in the way of those judgments that the righteous remnant waited for Jehovah, but what marks their desire is not merely the putting

down of evil; they have sought to His *name and memorial* (Exo. iii, 15), that is really to *Himself*. Deliverance is theirs and Jehovah their portion.

There had been desire for a false peace such as the ungodly nation try to secure by covenant with Antichrist. (Chap. xxviii. 15.) But now Jehovah ordains peace *for them*, their works could not secure it. The chastenings of Jehovah had brought them to own no other Lord but Him. No other name will they mention. They confess that *they* had wrought no deliverance; all they could do was to cry to Jehovah in prayer. It was with them as with Saul of Tarsus, "Behold, he prayeth"; he *rose up* (as it were with the sentence of death in himself) at the bidding of the Lord. The dead body of Israel will arise from the dust through the remnant. And owned by Jehovah as "my people" they are invited to hide themselves for a little moment till "the indignation" be overpast. We have already seen that the indignation of Jehovah is consummated in the final overflowing of the Assyrian hosts over the land of Israel and their destruction by the Lord who dwelleth in Zion. But the judgment falls upon the inhabitants of the earth, and the earth discloses her blood and shall no more cover her slain. It will be the fulfilment of

the Lord's word in Matthew xxiii. 35 and in Revelation xviii. 24. Apostate Israel and apostate Christendom as Babylon are found guilty of the blood shed on the earth. They are the successors of Cain. God has yet to charge the world with the death of His Son.

Chapter xxvii. closes this section. Satan, who has used the powers of the world against God and His Christ and people, under the figure of leviathan and of a dragon (Rev. xii. 3), is overthrown, and Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the world with fruit. The children of Israel, lost as they have been, and outcasts, will be gathered *one by one* (compare Ezek. xx. 33-38), and shall come *to worship* Jehovah in the holy mountain Jerusalem. They had once worshipped a calf; and the other idols which they worshipped afterwards were but the sequence of that which they did in the wilderness. But this chapter has brought us to the time of Psalm xcv. 1-7, and they now obey the commandment of Moses in Deuteronomy x. 20 quoted by the Lord in Matthew iv. 10; moreover it is at *Jerusalem*, the place which the Lord chose to put His name (1 Kings viii. 29), that the further ordinance of Moses (Deut. xii. 5, 6) is carried out. The last chapter (ver. 23) will tell us that "*all flesh*" shall come thither to worship, because "all flesh will see the salvation of God." (Luke iii.

6.) Thus the Lord secures His people from all link with the former state of things when men did what was right in their own eyes.

With Christians, wherever two or three are gathered to the Lord's name there is His presence. It is not "place" now ("neither this mountain nor Jerusalem"), but through Christ, in the power of one Spirit, both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father, and believers draw near within the veil.

The *historical* part of Isaiah's prophecy closes here. The succeeding sections will give us details in connection with what has already come before us.



CHAPTERS XXVIII.—XXXV.

WE have considered the two positions in which our prophet, as taught by the Spirit of Christ, surveys God's people. First, as in the land of their possession, their evil in it, and the consumption determined poured upon them in consequence. Secondly, as being linked with the nations around them, ending with universal convulsion, and the overturning of the system of those nations, and the disentangling of Israel, as a nation, therefrom; and finally, their recovery to the Lord, so that they worship Him at Jerusalem. At the same time the veil spread over all nations is removed.

There is an analogy in the history of the church *as the responsible witness* for a heavenly Christ. The land of our possession is a heavenly country. The assembly's witness soon failed through leaving its first love, and thus losing the sense of its espousal as a chaste virgin to Christ. What could it then do but sink down into a position in the world. The Lord takes note of this, saying, "I know where thou *dweldest*, where Satan's throne is."

We now come to more detail. Chapter xviii. has shewn us that Israel, through some power-

ful maritime nation, will be brought back to their own land ; but though permitted of God, He merely takes notice of that which men are doing. He is not in it. Chapter xxviii. regards them as there, and, first, woe is pronounced on the drunkards of Ephraim. The ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel *as distinct from Judah* are not in view here, but rather those of Israel who will be found linked with Judah in the last day. (Ezek. xxxvii. 16, "Judah, and the children of Israel his companions.") The ten tribes are not brought back until after the dealings of the Lord with those found in the land at the time we are considering. What marked these drunkards of Ephraim was the intoxication of pleasure and pride, their *glorious beauty* was as a fading flower. The remnant are contrasted, Jehovah of hosts is *their* crown of *glory*, and *their* diadem of *beauty*. The intoxication of these drunkards makes even the priest as well as the prophet to err and stumble in judgment. "Whom shall he teach knowledge?" is the prophet's question. The answer is in the spirit of our Lord's words: "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them *to babes*." The condescending grace of Jehovah, as we see it in Jesus, only brought them into worse judgment. In Jesus we see One who was constantly teaching "line upon line, precept

upon precept." Up to the last day of His service here, He taught in the temple. (Luke xxi. 37.)

The prophet turns from the country places to Jerusalem. The scornful men who ruled the people were *there*, and things were in an awful condition. In Daniel ix. 27, the last week of years of the unbelieving nation's history, brings before us one who confirms a covenant with the mass of the nation. It is he of whom our Lord spake, "who shall come in his own name." Such is the unfolding of *history*, but Isaiah gives *the character* of this covenant in God's sight—they had made a covenant *with death*, and were in agreement *with Hades*—like King Saul in his extremity (1 Sam. xxviii. 7), or as in chapter viii. 19, only that here it is more barefaced subjection to the power of darkness and evil. "Therefore thus saith Adonai Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." There is no hasting to escape from the overflowing scourge; the believer is on God's foundation when God's judgment sweeps away the refuge of lies. Could anything be more wonderfully gracious? And this grace the gospel now proclaims by Paul (Rom. ix. 33; x. 11), and by Peter. (1 Pet. ii. 6.) It is by the desolating

attack of the Assyrian that God consummates His judgment on this awful apostasy. The last part of the chapter, by an illustration, gives God's wonderful way of working out His own counsel. (Compare Psa. xxxiii. 11.)

In chapter xxix. Jerusalem is still before us, but as "*the city of David's encampment*"; it is designated as "Ariel" (the Lion of God; compare Rev. v.), as being the city of God's royalty and power. In it there was the round of religious observances; God would distress it and cause lamentation and mourning, yet to Him it was still "Ariel." Later on, it was the place where Jesus walked, and wept over it; but to Him it was "Jerusalem," the vision of peace. There is more here than the sweeping away of false confidence; they are brought into the very depths, and their voice is low, *out of the dust*. It is the attack of the nations, Assyria among them, as in Zechariah xiv., but Jehovah intervenes and all passes away as a dream. (See Psalm cxxiv. and cxxvi. 2.) The remnant will learn the lesson of death and resurrection. (Psa. cxvi. 3-8.) It is like the demon-possessed child (Mark ix. 26, 27): "Many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up." Abraham learned the lesson on mount Moriah (Gen. xxii.); Paul learned it also at Ephesus (2 Cor. i. 8-10.) So with Israel, *the nation* will be lifted

up from the dust of death by resurrection power.

The prophet (ver. 9) depicts the state of the people with whom God was dealing. They were in blind insensibility as to their privilege in having been entrusted with the *word of God*. To no other nation had God's oracles been committed (Psa. cxlvii. 19, 20; Rom. iii. 1, 2.) They had been taught that man should live by every word of God. But the whole vision had become to them as a sealed book. The light that had been given to them had become darkness, and how great was the darkness—utter incapacity to understand the communications of God! The consequence was that everything was turned upside down and perverted. So will it be with those in Christendom, who will believe a lie because they loved not the truth. "Men will arise, speaking perverted things." (Acts xx. 30.) There will be the form of godliness, but the power denied; and at last their ears turned from the truth to *fables*. Our Lord quoted verse 14 in Matthew xv., adding, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." In verse 17 the prophet says, "Yet a very little while," and God will turn things round; and the deaf will hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and the meek increase their joy in the Lord. The

scorner (the Antichrist) is consumed, and the name of the Holy One of Jacob is hallowed.

In chapter xxx. *sin is added to sin* ; there is *rebellion* against God, an apostate spirit which departs from Him ; they are lying children that will not hear the law of Jehovah, but seek refuge under the protection of Pharaoh ; they do not take counsel of God, nor ask of Him. They send ambassadors to Egypt, but Egypt was ashamed of a people that could not profit them ; if they helped, it would be in vain. All this was to be recorded *for the time to come* as a witness *for ever*. There is the positive rejection of the Holy One of Israel, and of His word. A witness for our day, that there may be much outward religious observance, as in chapter xxix., and yet incapacity to understand the words of the book ; and besides, positive rejection of the testimony of our Lord, and of Him whose testimony it is. This iniquity would be like a wall, whose breaking should come upon them suddenly.

In verse 15 there is the pleading of Jehovah, inviting them to return and rest in Him as their salvation, but they would not confide in Him. They would try and escape from the overflowing storm of judgment—they might flee till they came to the end of their tether, as the prodigal went from the father's house, until he found himself feeding swine in the far

country. But, oh ! the grace of God ! As the Father waited for the moment of the prodigal's turn round, so we read, "Therefore will Jehovah *wait*, that he may be gracious unto you." Read the whole passage (vers. 15-26); and further note how in each chapter of this section the evil is pointed out, and then the deliverance and the blessing at the end, when HE "binds up the breach of his people." Still this "name of Jehovah" makes itself known in the terrible overflowing of the stream that reaches *to the neck*. (Compare chap. viii. 8.) It is the Assyrian, but it is the day of his destruction, and of the remnant's deliverance. They have a song, while the breath of Jehovah's lips kindles the fire of judgment (2 Thess. ii. 8), by which both the Assyrian and "the king" (the apostate wilful king then reigning in Israel) are consumed.

Chapter xxxi. is a short commentary on the folly of seeking help from an arm of flesh: "the Egyptians are *men*, and not God." When the Lord stretches out His hand both the helper and the holpen fall together, for Jehovah will not abase Himself because *a multitude is against Him*. He is moving on behalf of His people and His city, and hence all the evil is manifested, the enemy serves His purpose in discovering it, but the Assyrian "meaneth not so," that is, to be a rod of chastening in the

hand of Jehovah (chap. x. 7); his object is to destroy, but the Lord will defend Jerusalem, and deliver it because it is His city. Then comes the exhortation to turn to Him from whom Israel had revolted deeply—they cast away their idols, the work of their hands, and the Assyrian falls.

And now, why does the Lord fight for mount Zion and defend Jerusalem? The answer is in chapter xxxii.: "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." It is the *establishment* of what was feebly portrayed in David (2 Sam. viii. 15), but of which he had to say, "Although my house be not so with God"; yet now, the "everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure" is brought to pass. (Compare Ezek. xxxvii. 24-26.) The King is the Man of whom Micah writes (chap. v. 2-5), the One born in Bethlehem, yet whose goings forth have been from the days of eternity. He is the hiding-place from the wind and tempest—"the peace, when the Assyrian comes into our land." Not only so, but "as rivers of water in a dry place," for the Spirit will be poured out from on high, and "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The veil will no longer be on the heart of Israel, their eyes will see and their ears hearken. Everything which was upside down (chap. xxix. 16) is now turned round. Villainy

and hypocrisy and wicked devices are no more cloaked over with religious observances, but the liberal, or noble, will devise noble things. (Compare Prov. xix. 6, where the word "prince" is the same as here translated liberal or noble.) He is "a man of gifts." Who could that be but He who reigns and gives character to His kingdom? Then all that was formerly rejoiced in, the carelessness and ease of nature, is changed to thorns and briers. It is the Spirit poured out from on high, the latter rain of Joel ii. 23, that changes the wilderness into a fruitful field, while what *was* a fruitful field is counted for a mere jungle. The former rain was at Pentecost (Acts ii. 17), and by the Spirit righteousness is now ministered to Christians from Christ the Lord in glory; here it is administered by the King in Zion. (Compare Psal. xcvi. 2, 9.) Righteousness is *now* found in a risen and glorified Christ, and moreover the Spirit, as the promise of the Father, links the believer with the glory and beauty of a heavenly Christ. To this Israel is now blind, as they were to Christ in humiliation, for the veil is on their heart. The Spirit now enables the believer to enter into the groans of creation according to God, whilst waiting for the day when they will be hushed under the righteous rule of Christ, and the heavenly saints will be manifested with

Him. What changes will be wrought in this poor world! It is the same meek and lowly One who said "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest" who will then give "quietness and assurance for ever," and cause His people to dwell in peaceable habitations. All that is exalted of man will be laid low—Jesus reigns and the Spirit will breathe peace through righteousness.

We have not here been considering *the history* of what *has* happened, but the wonderful ways of God in chastening and judgment, depicted in prophecy, until Jesus will sit upon the throne of David and rule for God, and Jerusalem will be the place of His feet, no longer in humiliation but in glory.

In chapter xxxiii. a spoiler is denounced; he has the same character as the "Gog" of Ezekiel (chap. xxxviii. 8-12), He comes to the mountains of Israel—"Israel that is brought forth out of the nations, that dwell safely"—his object is to take *a spoil*, but at that time Jehovah, who dwells on high, is said to have filled Zion with judgment (or justice) and righteousness. (Compare chap. xxxii. 1.) Hence the Spirit of Christ speaks in the remnant—"Jehovah, be gracious unto *us* . . . be thou *their* arm every morning, *our* salvation also in the time of trouble." Jehovah allows this enemy to come up, but there is no turning to Egypt

now; the Spirit of Christ leads them to trust the arm of Jehovah. In verse 10 Jehovah answers—Gog and his multitude are destroyed on the mountains of Israel. His coming up serves to discover the hypocrites, and to bring to light those who are the righteous remnant. In Ezekiel, Gog's destruction is the means whereby *all the nations* (those whom we now call heathen) shall see the judgment of the Lord Jehovah, and His glory be set among them. Psalm cvii. contemplates the remnant, "the redeemed of the Lord," as brought back to the land and blessed (compare ver. 37 with Isa. xxxii. 20), and again "minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow"; it is by means of this same enemy. The wise will observe these things, and understand the loving-kindness of Jehovah. After the destruction of this enemy all is peace. (Verses 20–23.) Verse 24 is in the spirit of Psalm ciii. 3.

Chapter xxxiv. is the last confederacy against Israel judged, not on the mountains of Israel, but in Idumea, or Edom. (Compare chap. lxiii. 1–6.) Psalm lxxxiii. points to Edom as foremost in this confederacy—in Obadiah 7 the men of Edom's confederacy prevail against Edom itself. A remarkable expression is used in verse 5, "My sword shall be bathed in the heavens"—they are rolled together as a scroll

—but it also comes down on “the people of my curse.” Other scriptures shew that clearing the heavenly places of the principalities and powers of evil is preparatory to Christ and the heavenly saints reigning there. The land of Edom becomes a desolation for ever.

Chapter xxxv. is the result for the remnant of the Spirit having been poured out from on high. (Chap. xxxii. 15.) The wilderness condition of Israel is about to be changed thereby. They had never entered into God’s rest; the Lord found them in that condition in Matthew xiv. 15, 16, and fed them there, as of old with manna in the desert; the multitude so connect it in their minds. (John vi. 31.) When Israel came up out of Egypt they were led into the desert to *find God there*. Hence, though they found bitter waters there, they were made sweet by the tree. Wells and palm trees were there, manna morning by morning, water from the rock, the sabbath of the Lord, and God for them. Who then could be against them? Yet with all this the wilderness did not rejoice *for them*, nor the desert blossom as the rose. Verse 3 of our chapter is quoted in Hebrews xii., where the difficulties of the way to heaven are shewn to be the necessary discipline of a Father’s hand for their profit, and in verses 22–24 the christian Hebrews are said to have come to the whole extent of millennial blessing

(heavenly and earthly), mount Zion, the mount of God's election and grace in Christ, introducing to all the other. All is in full view to faith. What we have seen as the result of Christ's reign in chapter xxxii. 3 is fully realised in verses 5 and 6. Matthew xi. 5 describes the same delivering power in Jesus, but in the after verses His rejection by that generation. Here we have the ransomed of the Lord returned to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. The wilderness blossomed for them, in it was the highway to Zion which could not be missed, nor Satan's power intrude to hinder their progress (compare Psa. lxxxiv. 5-7), the redeemed of Jehovah walk there. "They will be still praising thee," and sorrow and sighing flee away.

CHAPTERS XXXVI.—XXXIX.

In chapters xxxvi. and xxxvii. the detail of the Assyrian's coming up against Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah is given by the Spirit of Christ. It is thus given as being guidance for the remnant in the last day, and not as a mere history. Hezekiah, a true son of David, places his confidence in Jehovah. The Assyrian knew well the tendency of the people to trust in Egypt, and taunts them with it. Hezekiah *did not answer* the messenger of Sennacherib, but went into the house of the Lord in sack-cloth. He sent also a message to the prophet asking him to pray for the "remnant that is left," and speaks of the taunts of the Assyrian as being against the living God. Isaiah's message to the king shews that Jehovah fully took into account that the Assyrian had blasphemed Him, and his doom is announced. Faith is still tested by a letter which the king spreads before the Lord and prays, and Isaiah is commissioned to give the answer. It is beautiful to see here the connection between Jehovah's prophet and Jehovah's king. God will defend the city for *His own sake*, and for

His servant David's sake, for David was represented in Hezekiah; but the answer goes further—the escaped remnant shall take root downward and bear fruit upward, and the storm that threatened is like a dream of the night. (Chap. xxix. 7; Psa. cxxvi. 1.) In this record we become conscious of the Spirit of Christ through the prophet taking up the sorrows of His people. We are able now to interpret the deliverance, as the remnant will their deliverance in the last days, by the overwhelming sorrows and death of Jesus, and His strong crying and tears, and His resurrection life and glory. Hence in chapter xxxviii. we have the son of David with the sentence of death in him, and with him strong crying and tears in consequence. Jehovah responds, “Thus saith Jehovah, *the God of David thy father* I will add unto thy days fifteen years.” It is resurrection power, *moving in earthly scenes*, which brings Hezekiah up from the very jaws of death, and this resurrection power has been fully brought to light in Jesus. The Spirit of prophecy anticipates it in such scriptures as Psalm xxi. 4, 5, and Isaiah xlix. 8. To Hezekiah death would have been the quitting Zion and Jerusalem, where Jehovah's deliverance had been manifested; with the Christian it is going to be with Christ. But it was necessary that Hezekiah should

realise the breaking down of all hope in the flesh. The flesh would have gloried in being favoured with such a wonderful deliverance from the hosts of Assyria, but the life of the spirit was furthered by the sentence of death on the flesh. *We* are taught in 2 Corinthians v. 5 that this "life of the spirit" is wrought by God in the believer in view of his having a resurrection body heavenly in character.

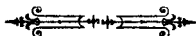
In reading Hezekiah's prayer and his writing after his recovery, we may note that in his prayer he said, "I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart," that is, his heart had not turned aside from the Lord. Then his sickness taught him to bow to the Lord's dealings, "Himself hath done it"; and it had taught him to "walk softly"—there was a humbling process wrought in his soul, and the sense that in the Lord's chastenings is the life of the spirit. The desire also is expressed to "sing my songs . . . *all the days of our life* in the house of the Lord." So far we get a typical picture written for the last days when the Assyrian power will come against Jerusalem and will find Jehovah and His King, the Son of David, there. (Compare Psa. lxxvi.) The Assyrian, the king of the north of Daniel, comes to his end with none to help him. (Dan. xi. 45.) But at that time the delivered remnant

will learn a deeper lesson, as in Psalm cxviii. 18, "*Jehovah hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.*" At that time also they will look on Him whom they pierced and mourn, but this subject will come before us in chapter liii.

In chapter xxxix. another lesson is learnt, not only that the flesh is worthless, but that the friendship of the world is enmity against God. Hezekiah had been prosperous (2 Chron. xxxii. 27-30) and "*his heart was lifted up*" (ver. 25), and in this matter of the embassy from Babylon "God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart," (Verse 31.) The expressed friendship of the world was too much for him, and he exhibits his prosperity to its messengers. Isaiah predicts the captivity of the natural line of the house of David in Babylon. There we leave them captive, with their harps hung on the willows, unable to sing the Lord's song, as Hezekiah had said, in the house of the Lord.

While Isaiah xviii. shews us that the people will be put back into their own land in the last days in unbelief, yet it is equally clear from many scriptures that a large number will remain mixed with the nations, held by the fascinations of the great idolatrous and commercial grandeur of the mystical Babylon

of Revelation. The call, "Come out of her, my people," is doubtless addressed to them in the crisis of the last days. The remnant will learn that God sent them there for their good. (Jer. xxiv. 5.) Compare also Isaiah xlviii. 20 and lii. 11.



CHAPTERS XL.-XLVIII.

THIS section prophetically states the pleadings of Jehovah with His people. They are viewed by the prophet as having been sent to Babylon, as Jeremiah says, "for their good." (Chap. xxiv. 5.) In the most touching way the Spirit of *Jehovah* by the prophet puts Himself before them, in the truth of His own essential Being, and of His creatorial greatness and glory, as *their God*. One who would, as He ever does, meet them *where they are*, in a low estate, to comfort and deliver them. But their blessing depended upon His maintaining His own holy and righteous character. He could not suffer His glory to be polluted. To Him they were to hearken as to One who had chosen them in the furnace of affliction (chap. xlviii. 10), and was teaching them to profit.

The two first verses form the preface to this section. The prophetic Spirit uses the terms "*my people*" and "*your God*." It is He only who can comfort with divine comforts. He had chastened them, and as in Hosea ii. 14 had allured them into the wilderness, that there He might "speak to their heart." Hence we read, "the voice of one crying *in the wilder-*

ness." He speaks to the heart of Jerusalem, her time of suffering He declares is accomplished, her iniquity pardoned. The atoning work on account of which this can be said is not mentioned, it is found in chapter liii. Here it is the vindication of God's holy government in that He has rendered double to her in chastening for all her sins.

God not only speaks to the heart—His tender mercies are very precious, but He also addresses the conscience. The way must be prepared for God to come in—the axe must be laid to the root of the tree—"all flesh is grass," thus the ground is cleared. Man, whether he can call Abraham father or not, is entirely set aside, and then a God of mercy can occupy the ground. We may compare the words used here (ver. 5), "the glory of Jehovah," and those quoted from the LXX. in Luke iii. 6, "the salvation of God," together (as in Psa. xxi. 5, "His glory is great in thy salvation") and "*all flesh* shall see it." If God begins with Israel, He does not stop there. But then, if "all flesh is grass," "the word of Jehovah"—that of which He speaks—"abides for ever." Peter tells us that it is the gospel (not the law), as that of which the word speaks, which abides for ever. Hence Zion and Jerusalem, who have been comforted, are to lift up the voice as proclaimers of glad tidings: say to the cities of

Judah, "Behold your God!" How well could Zion and Jerusalem speak of His tenderness. (Ver. 2.) Then in verses 12-17 *His* greatness is brought before us, with whom all difficulties and oppositions are as nothing. Who could give *Him* counsel? Who could tell *Him* how to bring about the thoughts of mercy that belonged to Him? or to whom could they liken this great all-wise and glorious Being? (Vers. 18-26.) An idol is *a likeness*, and when it is made it has to be set in its place by the maker; but the Holy One of Israel was He who "sitteth upon the circle of the earth . . . ; that stretcheth out the heavens as a . . . tent to dwell in." Israel thought that in His varied ways in creation they had not been noticed by God. How beautifully does He reply that He, "Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, *fainteth not*, neither is weary." Not only so, but to *the faint* He gives power, and where there was no might He increases strength. God's patient ways, so little understood, serve to discover those who are truly His people. Nature faints and falls, but those who wait on Him renew their strength, "they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Chapter xli. If the true Israel thus renew their strength, the isles of the Gentiles are to

keep silence before Jehovah. Let the peoples, the nations around, renew *their* strength, but God will have to say to them. In righteousness He raises up one from the east (Cyrus) and gave the nations as dust to his sword. If the powers of men lift themselves up, God can overthrow them. Israel held a peculiar and elect place before God. "Thou, Israel, art my servant . . . the seed of Abraham my friend," whom Jehovah would uphold with the right hand of His righteousness. What was their low estate—"thou worm Jacob"—if Jehovah's strength was on their side? Moreover, He would sustain them, poor and needy as they were, in wilderness surroundings (vers. 17-19), and give them to challenge all the idolatrous nations with that which the Holy One of Israel would bring to pass by means of one not yet known in history, but whom Jehovah could name. Cyrus.

Chapter xlii. That Israel was Jehovah's servant, as His witness against idols having been set forth—Messiah, *God's elect Servant*, is now introduced as taking up this position of Israel. It is made good in Him. This is an immense point to bear in mind for the understanding of these chapters. Verses 1-4 are a prophetic utterance as to Christ. It is so quoted in Matthew xii. 16-21. Pharisees might take counsel to destroy Him, or the multitude, on

the other hand, seek to make Him known ; but He moved on in the consciousness of being *Jehovah's Servant*, nor would He fail nor be discouraged, though everything was weak and failing with Israel, and the Gentiles were lawless and violent. Israel's attention is called to this elect Servant : "*Behold* my servant, whom I uphold ; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth ; I have put *my spirit* upon him : he shall bring forth judgment [or justice, just judgment] to the Gentiles." He is upheld by Jehovah ; there is no assertion of Himself ; the light for Jehovah in Israel might be as smouldering flax, and their strength as a bruised reed—a feeble remnant—but He would not *fail* (an allusion to the flax) nor be *broken* (margin, an allusion to the bruised reed) till He have set justice in the earth, and the isles (of the Gentiles) shall wait for His law. Jehovah, the Creator, had called Him in righteousness, and would hold His hand (vers. 5–7), He would preserve Him—treasured up now in the heavens—and give Him for a covenant of the people (Israel), for a light of the Gentiles, to *open the blind eyes*, and to bring those that sit *in darkness* out of the prison house. This has been anticipated in the ministry of the apostle of the Gentiles. (Acts xxvi. 18.) See also Romans xv. 9–12, where the verses which speak of the Gentiles being

joined in millennial blessing with Israel are quoted, and Paul (ver. 16) regards himself as a ministering priest offering up the Gentiles as a firstfruits, at that time of their full ingathering when Jesus, Jehovah's servant, will reign over them in justice and righteousness. In Him is the hope of the Gentiles. In Him we see Jehovah accomplishing His purpose both in Israel and to the ends of the earth. Israel, set in the position of Jehovah's servant, was both blind and deaf, but Jehovah's delight in His own righteousness was seen in His elect servant, and the law was magnified in Him.

Chapter xliii. Now that the prophetic Spirit has called attention to this elect and beloved servant, Israel, who had been robbed and spoiled because of their sin against Jehovah, is thus addressed: "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." Neither overflowing rivers, such as the Assyrian, nor consuming fire, such as Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, should hurt them—they are precious in His sight; but it is evident that Israel is represented by those whom Jehovah calls sons and daughters, *every one called by His name*, created for His glory. This regathered remnant would be Jehovah's witnesses. Let the nations and peoples be gathered, let them bring forth *their* witnesses. Could they declare these hidden ways of

Jehovah? Israel were *His* witnesses of His creative power that formed them (poor brick-makers) into a nation; of His redemption; of His preservation through water and fire; of recovering power from east and west and north and south; of Jehovah's glory, the alone I AM, or as in verses 10-13, "I [am] HE," a kind of answer to "I AM." He would bring forth new things, as He will, by His servant in the power of resurrection. Israel shall be for His praise, though they had been weary of Him. He had formed them for Himself. Moreover, for His own sake He would blot out their iniquities, and not remember their sins. "Put me *in remembrance*" is, I judge, a reference to Exodus iii. 15. The name I AM was His *memorial* to all generations. They could always plead it, though they had sinned from the first, and been given to the curse and reproaches.

"Yet [chap. xliv.] *now hear*, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen." How blessed it is that God can meet man, be he sinner or saint, just where he is. The more man is dealt with by God, whether under law or under grace, the more is it proved that he is alienated from God, lost to Him, and ready to serve idols, whether the work of his own hands or those he sets up in his heart (Ezek. xiv. 3), but God's mercy goes after him, and

arrests him, and then deals with him just as he is and where he is. "Fear not," is His word. He is recovering Israel for Himself, though His thought is brought out in Christ first, and then in a remnant. They are in a wilderness condition, not yet established in Zion, but the deliverer whom God would use is named. Jehovah meets them where they are in verse 3. He will pour His Spirit upon them, and though in the wilderness they spring up as willows by the watercourses. This Spirit rested on Christ (chap. xlii. 1), and one and another, who had perhaps entirely forgotten Jehovah's call and election, would spring up, saying, "I am Jehovah's," and others sur-name themselves as of Jehovah's people—the Israel of God. And here we have, as in the Book of Revelation, Jehovah proclaiming Himself as "the first and the last." Of old He appointed the people, and now declared the coming things with regard to them. Paul's word that an idol is nothing in the world is fully proved. (Vers. 9–20.) "Remember these things, O Jacob and Israel." Israel was Jehovah's servant and not forgotten of Him. Where among all the idols of the heathen could be found any thought of a deity blotting out transgressions and sins? And this Israel's Jehovah had done. Then there is the joy of God in recovery. "Return unto me ; for I have

redeemed thee. *Sing, ye heavens; for Jehovah hath done it.*" The coming things are then declared, that Cyrus (named some one hundred and eighty years before he appeared) should perform Jehovah's pleasure, "saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." (Ezra i. 1-4.)

In chapter xlv. 1-7, Jehovah's prophetic address to Cyrus is given. From verse 8, and on, the prophet is rapt in the thoughts of *Jehovah* and His salvation, which go far beyond the deliverance accomplished by Cyrus. "Israel shall be saved *by Jehovah* with an *everlasting salvation*," and not "be ashamed nor confounded, unto the ages of ages." And if Jehovah had bidden *Israel* to seek Him as "a just God and a Saviour," He would also say, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth*: for I am God, and there is none else." The decree is gone out in righteousness that to Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear. In Philippians ii. 11, it is at the name of Jesus (Jehovah, the Saviour), He who for God's glory humbled Himself to death, that every knee shall bow, heavenly, earthly or infernal, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

In chapter xlv. Jehovah's pleading is continued. Strange mystery of everlasting loving-kindness! What of great Babylon that *man*

had builded? Her so-called gods had to be carried: they were a burden to the weary beasts that dragged them along in their processions. But Jehovah had made, and would carry, the remnant of the house of Israel to their hoar hairs, and would deliver them. The pleading is continued through the chapter. We need to see in it the spirit of Christ, of Him who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How blessedly did He count in confiding faith on His Father in the midst of the contradiction of sinners, and how near did He bring to them God's righteousness and salvation; and though the time had to be deferred for placing in Zion salvation for "Israel my glory" (ver. 13), yet it became the occasion of another company being set in righteousness and exceeding grace before God, for His eternal glory—the assembly of the firstborn ones.

Chapter xlvii. is the prophetic summons to Babylon, the lady (or mistress) of kingdoms, to come down and sit in the dust. That must be if God sets His glory in Zion. The thought of Babylon was to be a lady for ever. But all the powers of evil should not ward off her desolation. God might use her for the chastisement of Israel, but her destruction would be the triumph of the One true and only Jehovah against the wickedness of idolatry.

The final destruction of the mystical Babylon (Rev. xviii.) makes way for the marriage of the Lamb to take place in heaven with the assembly, as the chaste virgin long before espoused to Him, and afterwards for the kingdom glories of the Son of man.

In chapter xlviii. those who then bore the name of Israel are called on to hear; those who came forth *out of the waters of Judah*, and called themselves of the holy city, then represented the house of Israel. It was so on the return from the captivity, and will be so in the last days. They made mention of the *God of Israel*, but not in truth or righteousness. He speaks to them as Jehovah of hosts, and would have them know (obstinate and stiff-necked as they were, and dealing treacherously) that it was "HE," the First and the Last, who was bringing to pass the purposes of His will as to Israel. He had chosen them in the furnace of affliction (Deut. iv. 20), and was acting towards them for the glory of His name, cutting the ground from under their feet as to its being the work of their idols. Jehovah had intervened in such a way so that His name should not be profaned, nor His glory given to another. The great witness that it was "HE," and none other, was the call of Cyrus to execute His pleasure on Babylon. Isaiah declares that the Lord God and His Spirit had sent him.

The succeeding verses close the magnificent pleadings of Jehovah with His people. If they would only hearken to their Redeemer, their peace might be as a river—led and taught to profit, and increased, as had been promised to Jacob. (Gen. xxviii. 14.) Furthermore, if *Jehovah intervened* to deliver them, *they themselves* are called on to *go forth from Babylon*, for what was there in common between God's Israel and Babylon? (Zech. ii. 7.) This became the then present test of faith; were they Israel in truth and righteousness, or were they those to whom Jehovah's word was, "No peace to the wicked"? We may notice that this section does not close with praise or worship, but with the summons to go forth from unholy association with the idolatrous world. It must be so if Jehovah is their God.



CHAPTERS XLIX.—LVII.

THE keynote to the last section was, "Prepare the way of Jehovah." In this section it is observing "the voice of Jehovah's servant"—Christ. We have seen that Israel was set in the position of Jehovah's servant, and now in chapter xlix. 1 we have the Spirit of Christ speaking *in Israel*, and the coasts of the Gentiles are summoned to listen. Jehovah addresses Israel as His servant in whom He would be glorified, but surely we learn, from verses 4 and 5 (where it is evident that the One who answers is none other than *Christ Himself*), that in the first three verses we must read *Christ in the remnant*. We have a proof of how Christ takes up the history of Israel in Hosea xi. 1, compared with Matthew ii. 15. It was in submitting to John's baptism that He formally identified Himself with the repentant remnant (Matt. iii. 13-15), but His labour with a people according to the flesh was in vain; yet His judgment (a just estimate of Him and His service) was with Jehovah, and His work with His God. It needed that the place of little children should be taken, in order to recognise Jesus as Jehovah's Servant

labouring in Israel for God. (Matt. xi. 25.) But though apparently His labour was in vain as to Israel being gathered, yet was He glorified in the eyes of Jehovah His Father. (John xvii. 4.) The little ones, taught of His Father, He fed and guided as a flock. (Chap. xl. 11.) Jehovah replies in verse 6; the gathering of Israel was a light thing. He had given Him as a Light of the Gentiles, and for salvation unto the end of the earth (see Acts xiii. 47), which Paul quotes when the Jews rejected the gospel. Verse 8 evidently refers to the Messiah (despised by man and abhorred by the nation) having been heard by Jehovah in an accepted time, and helped in a day of salvation. It was in resurrection that this acceptance was declared, and in Jesus saved out of death the day of salvation began. There is thus a break in this verse, though the latter part depends on the part quoted. Paul in 2 Corinthians vi. 2 says that *now* is the accepted time, and *now* the day of salvation. Hence the whole gospel period during which the church is gathered, saved and accepted in Christ's salvation and acceptance, comes into the middle of verse 8. Then follows Christ preserved, treasured up in the heavens in God's presence, and given for a covenant of *the people* (Israel) to establish *the land*, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages, that is, of the tribes of Israel. Then, at

once, the return of Israel is predicted, they are the afflicted ones—the subjects of mercy, Jehovah comforts them. What an answer to the plaint of verse 4. The beautiful awaking of long-sorrowing Zion to the thoughts of God (vers. 15, 16) has comforted the people of God in all ages with the sense of His unchanging love. But when once resurrection power comes in to gather the remnant to Zion its enlargement takes place until they are straitened for room.

Chapter I. If we have seen Messiah answering to God's thought as to Israel, and the listening isles of the Gentiles find salvation in Him when rejected of Israel, and yet, during the time of the church's acceptance and salvation, that Zion had been graven on the palms of Jehovah's hands—now in this chapter we see that this Messiah is Jehovah Himself, and yet He is Jehovah's Servant. He is the day-man who can lay His hand on both Jehovah and Israel. "Wherefore, *when I came*, was there no man" is surely Messiah, yet He is Jehovah with no unshortened hand to redeem, One who clothes the heavens with blackness and makes sackcloth their covering; yet, on the other hand, Adonai Jehovah had given him *the tongue* of the instructed, that He might succour *the weary* with a word. Such is the mystery of His Person. We then get the low

place which He would take as a servant, with an ear wakened morning by morning to do the Lord Jehovah's will. He would not turn back from doing it, though it involved giving His back to the smiters and His cheeks to those who plucked off the hair. This humiliation is prophetically foretold by His own Spirit, but the Lord Jehovah would help Him (compare Psa. xvi. 8), and in that lowly path of humbling Himself even to death none could condemn, nor would He be *ashamed*. Follow Him from Gethsemane to the cross, step by step, and mark the calm dignity of One who was neither confounded nor *ashamed*. Compare Romans viii. 33, 34, where the Spirit puts the challenge of Christ in this chapter into the mouth of those who now believe on Him. We have, too, in Philippians i. 12-21 the example of one who followed Christ closely, so that Satan got no advantage over him, and Christ shone out in him in the midst of injustice, imprisonment, envy and strife. His earnest expectation and hope was that in nothing he might *be ashamed*, but that Christ might be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death; and for this he desired the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the prayers of the saints.

The chapter opened with the reason why Israel had been put away, their sins had done it, and, moreover, when Messiah came there

was no answer. In verse 10 the remnant is marked out; "they fear Jehovah and obey the voice of his servant." Do they walk in darkness? Jesus never did (John xi. 9), and now, if any follow Him, they have the light of life; but Jesus was not known to the remnant, save in the Spirit of the prophetic word. That word would teach them to confide in the name of Jehovah, and to stay upon their God. Those who kindled sparks of their own would lie down in darkness.

In chapter li. the voice of Jehovah's Servant addresses this remnant: "Hearken *to me*, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek Jehovah." They might be few and feeble, but they are told to look to Abraham, God had called him *alone*—he had no support from man, his father Terah and nephew Lot were only hindrances in the path of faith—God blessed him and increased him. So God could bless and comfort solitary Zion, and make her wilderness as Eden, and fill her with joy and thanksgiving.

A second time there is the call to hearken. The word here is more emphatic, "*Listen* unto me, *my people*." Those named in verse 1 are now owned as "my people"—"my nation"—a race owned of Jehovah. They do not now stand round mount Sinai. Jehovah's law now goes forth *from Him*, and *out of Zion*. (Chap.

ii. 3.) His judgment would be established for a light of the peoples. Salvation is joined to righteousness. Heaven and earth may pass, but *Jehovah's* salvation is for ever, and *His* righteousness shall not be abolished. (Compare Rom. iii. 21-25.)

A third time the call to hearken is repeated to the remnant as those *who know righteousness*—the law has been written in their hearts. Jehovah associates this peculiar race with His own goings forth in righteousness and salvation. This would bring them into reproach. "Fear not" is His word to them; all the revilings of men would pass away, but His righteousness and salvation would be for ever.

We have seen Jehovah's Servant calling on the remnant to hearken. Now in verse 9 He speaks on their behalf to Jehovah, "Awake, awake . . . O arm of Jehovah," and yet *He is* the arm of Jehovah. "Is it not THOU" ("the same," Psa. cii. 27) who of old smote Egypt, and made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Hence chapter xxxv. 10 is repeated here. (Ver. 11.) How blessedly the Spirit of Christ speaks in the name of Jehovah. If He is for them, who against them? If the waves of the sea roared, it was He who had raised them up who comforted them. His words are put into their mouth, and these are some of His words: "That I

may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people."

In verse 17 Jerusalem is called on *to arouse herself* (it is a different form of the word "awake") to the sense of this "Arm of Jehovah" and its actings. If she had received at the hand of Jehovah the cup of trembling, now He would plead her cause, and put the cup into the hand of those who had afflicted her. How often the soul gets bewildered with the affliction, as was Job, instead of arousing itself to discern whose blessed hand is dealing with it for good!

Again in chapter lii. the cry is heard, "Awake, awake," not now for the arm of Jehovah to put on strength, but Zion is called on so to do, for the arm of Jehovah was her strength, and His righteousness and salvation her beautiful garments. (Chap. lxi. 10.) Now she is called the "holy city," and nothing that defiles shall henceforth enter. The redemption by Jehovah's arm brings them to know His name as given to Moses at the bush—"I am he that saith, here AM I," "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

And now the tidings of Zion's peace and salvation must go forth, the voice is lifted up without discord. Jehovah has made bare *His holy arm* in the sight of all the nations, and

all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. (Compare Psa. xcvi. 1-3.) The assembly is a saved company—saved in the salvation of Christ once crucified, but risen and glorified. She is the witness of the salvation *published in the name of the glorified Saviour in the whole creation under heaven*, and of a part with Him in heavenly glory.

If God's salvation is manifested, then comes the call to depart from the midst of Babylon, and not to touch what is unclean; it would not be as in the day of departing from Egypt "in haste and by flight," but the principle is the same. Jehovah's word to Moses was, "Speak to the children of Israel *that they go forward.*" As to their salvation, they *stand still* and see it, but faith moves in the path of salvation. We see in Ezra (chap. viii. 21-33) the path of quiet confidence in "our God" trodden from Babylon to Jerusalem, and those who bore the holy vessels of the Lord were holy also. The promise to the remnant here called on "to depart" is that Jehovah would go before them, and the God of Israel be their rear-guard. They respond to His salvation.

But now in verse 13 attention is directed to Jehovah's Servant. He will deal prudently. Matthew xi. 25-30 is a commentary for us on this. Everything was disorder in Israel, but Jesus moved on in the path of His Father's

will, and in the consciousness that all things were delivered into His hand by His Father; yet He was in rejection. The wise and prudent did not recognise Him, but to babes was revealed that this One, who wore the marks of deep humiliation, was the Son of the Father's love, and that He should be exalted and lifted up and made very high. As many were astonished at the marks on Him, not of glory, but of abasement and rejection, so should He astonish many nations. They see and consider the tidings of His exaltation. This awaits the day of Zion's deliverance; but Romans x. 14-17 teaches us of *a present* going forth of the tidings of salvation and peace during the time of Israel's unbelief. Hence the question of:—

Chapter liii. is of deep interest to us Gentiles. Faith is of *the report*, not of *sight*, for in verse 2 the confession is made, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when *we shall see him*, there is no beauty that we should desire him." In Jehovah's sight He was a tender plant, and a root out of a dry ground—one green plant in the midst of barrenness, but "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"; and again, the remnant confess "we esteemed him not." The chapter anticipates prophetically the day of Israel's repentance, and awaking to the

sense that He, whom they had esteemed as stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, had been wounded for their transgressions—verses 4-6 contain their confession. Yet, what awakened sinner, to-day, but takes home to himself these words, making confession to being healed through the sufferings of Jesus. Verses 7, 8 formed the text of Philip's discourse to the Ethiopian eunuch. (Acts viii. 32, 33.) His life had been taken from the earth, and the Ethiopian was baptised to His death. Our old history is closed by His death and a new history begins by our identification with Him who died. In Acts ix. Saul sees Him in heavenly glory, exalted and made very high. It was Jehovah who had made His soul an offering for sin, and thus there is a new generation of forgiven sinners, saved and blessed, the fruit of the travail of His soul, for He has done what none else could do—He has poured out His soul unto death, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Luke xxiii. 34.) Let the reader meditate on the subject; its sweetness and depth and fulness has been the comfort of souls in all ages.

In chapter liv. this new generation is counted to Jerusalem. The Spirit of God by Paul teaches us this, shewing the fulness of this passage which He had inspired Isaiah to write. (Gal. iv. 26, 27.) We have to look at Jerusalem

abstractly as the "city of God," whether viewed as on earth or in heaven. Psalm lxxxvii. shews what gave it additional importance, "This man was born there." Christ in resurrection is the beginning of all the glory and blessing of God's city. He it is that will build up Jerusalem on earth, but what will her awakening be in a day yet to come to find her children (begotten while she was desolate, and registered as believers on her Messiah while she was in unbelief) in a far more glorious state—Jerusalem above, the mother of the children of promise—the tent of Jerusalem below will be enlarged, she shall spread abroad on the right hand and the left, but she will rejoice in the light of the glory shining in the heavenly city, and thus Jerusalem below will be at the gate of heaven. (Gen. xxviii. 17.) The glory of God which arises on Jerusalem below is the same glory of God, shining in the person of the Lamb, which fills the heavenly city. The administration of the Son of man (John i. 51) will link the two in the age to come. Then Jerusalem on earth will be enlarged, Jehovah's lovingkindness will be known as enduring for ever, her children all taught of Jehovah, and great their peace—they are established in righteousness. All this they will find in Him who poured out His soul unto death for them, for the last verse tells us that

their righteousness is not of themselves but of Jehovah, and Jesus we know is He who is made righteousness to God's people—they are called here "the servants of Jehovah."

In chapter lv., while we can in spirit adopt its evangelical invitations and exhortations, yet it is evident that as in Jerusalem above the river of the water of life flows in the city, so in Jerusalem on earth the springs of God are found in her. (Psa. lxxxvii. 7; Ezek. xlvii. 1-12. Compare also John vii. 37, 39.) How deeply had the remnant drunk of the lovingkindness of Jehovah, and of the "river of his pleasures," secured by the sure mercies of David in resurrection! (Psa. lxxxix. 19; Acts xiii. 34.) As in Revelation xxii. 17, *whoever thirsts* is invited to come—be they scattered Israel or Gentiles. Jehovah gives the "holy One" of Psalm lxxxix. 19 (lit. the "mercy One") to be a prince and commander to the Gentile races. (Psa. xviii. 49.) In verse 6 there is the exhortation to seek the Lord while He may be found, as in Psalm xcv. 7, "*To-day* if ye will hear his voice." Mercy and abundant pardon are with Him, for His thoughts and ways are not as man's (compare Jer. xxix. 11), and His word should surely accomplish that for which He sends it. This evangelical chapter closes with the anticipation of millennial blessing. (Compare Psa. xcvi. 11-13.)

Chapter lvi. The object which governs the soul produces the conduct suited to that object. Beholding the Lord's glory transforms the saint into His image. So here (ver. 1) the exhortation to keep judgment (or justice) and to do righteousness is founded on the assured nearness of *God's* salvation, and the revelation of *His* righteousness. We could not have Christ as our righteousness in the presence of God and have a different estimate of righteous conduct down here. This is not confined to the Jew, for in verse 2 we have, "*Blessed is the man,*" whoever he may be, and the son of man who holds fast to this godly conduct. If the sabbath of the earth under the rule of Christ was near and expected, such a man would keep the sabbath day and not profane it. Even those disqualified from entering into the congregation of the Lord, if they kept *Jehovah's* sabbaths and His covenant, should have a place within His walls better than of sons and daughters. What availed now was reality. His house should be called the house of prayer for all peoples. (Matt. xxi. 13.) The sabbath was the sign between Jehovah and His people. (Ezek. xx. 12, 20.) It stood at the beginning of the feasts of Jehovah—"a holy convocation" (Lev. xxiii. 3)—God's gathering His people into His own rest. Verse 8 shews that others are gathered beside the outcasts of Israel.

Verse 9 refers to the Gentile "beasts" who would seek to devour, while Israel's watchmen were blind: and their shepherds, living for self gratification, were unable to discern. (Matt. xvi. 2, 3.)

Chapter lvii. During the time of Jehovah's patience, the prophetic announcement of what He was about to bring in was given to act upon the consciences of those who had ears to hear; and during this waiting time it might seem as if the righteous perished, but in reality they had been gathered in from the evil to come, and they had entered into peace. Verses 3-9 describe the abominable wickedness of the ungodly nation, culminating in their going to "the king" with ointment—the apostate king and Antichrist—and debasing itself to hades. In chapter xxviii. they make a covenant with death and hades for protection, here to satisfy their evil desires. Yet they were wearied in the greatness of their way, but content to find the life of their hand. The wind should sweep them away (compare Jer. xxx. 23, 24), and the godly remnant, those who put their trust in Jehovah, should inherit His holy mountain. A way is cast up for them where are no stumbling blocks. (Compare Jer. xxxi. 9.) Then in verse 15 we have the very beautiful and touching declaration of the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, and whose

name is Holy; "I dwell in the high and holy place," but also "with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive them." How tenderly now is the backsliding recovered, comforts restored and peace spoken, both to him that is afar off and to him that is nigh. Ephesians ii. 17 enlarges this lovely thought, all enmity having been done away by the cross. The section concludes as the former one, "There is no peace, saith *my God*, to the wicked." Only note here, that it is not a mere oracular statement, but that One speaks who can say "*My God*." The key to this section is found in "Jehovah's servant."

CHAPTERS LVIII.—LXVI.

IN chapters lviii. and lix. we have, I judge, the moral preparation of heart and ways for the glory revealed as to come in chapter lx. It is so with us who are church-saints. The fullest glory of grace is unfolded in the Ephesian epistle, but to Timothy, *who was at Ephesus*, the apostle unfolds the mystery of *piety*. It is a moral foundation in the soul. So in 2 Peter i.: "Divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness"; verses 5-7 recapitulate "these things" through which an abundant entrance is ministered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The prophetic word by Isaiah judges all formality, and lays bare the real state of things which lay below the outward observance of the ordinances of God. The last days are evidently contemplated. Isaiah prophetically lifts up his voice as a trumpet to declare the transgressions and sins of those who held the place of God's people, while verses 6 and 7 shew the godly conduct which corresponded to Jehovah's character. If it were so, their light should break forth as the morning, their prayer would be heard.

Jehovah would guide them, they would be as a well-watered garden; this godly remnant should be called "Repairer of the breaches, restorer of frequented paths." In verse 13 the real keeping of the sabbath is brought before them, the opportunity of finding delight in Jehovah and His ways—the heritage of such would be the blessing given to Jacob. (Gen. xxviii. 13–15.)

Jehovah's hand was not shortened that it could not save (chap. lix.), but their sins had separated them from their God, and the prophet goes on to convict them. Paul uses verses 7 and 8 in Romans iii. to convict both Jew and Gentile, and thus to bring the whole world guilty before God. In verses 9–15 the convicted remnant speak, owning their guilty conduct. "Jehovah saw it." What was to be done? There was no intercessor. Jehovah takes up the cause of those who confess their guilty state. He clothes Himself with salvation and righteousness on the one hand, and on the other with garments of vengeance. He is about to thoroughly purge His floor. He will repay according to their deeds (Deut. xxxii. 35), recompense to His enemies. It is a terrible thing when God's adversaries are found among those who ostensibly are His people. Such was the revolt against Him, that any who departed from evil made himself a prey. Jehovah's fear is then learned by His judg-

ments being in the earth. His intervention comes in two ways. Against the overwhelming flood of wickedness the Spirit of Jehovah raises a standard ; and the Redeemer comes to Zion. There will be the Elijah character of the Spirit's acting before the Redeemer comes to Zion. Elijah met the whole force of Satan's power in Ahab, and of Jezebel and the prophets of Baal, in the *power of the Spirit of Jehovah* ; we see *in him* afterwards the weakness of the flesh in fleeing to Horeb from Jezebel. John Baptist afterwards came in the Spirit and power of Elias to prepare the way of the Lord. Then the Lord joined Himself to those in Israel, whom John baptised, confessing their sins. But He, too, in the power of the Spirit, binds the strong man, and in the power of the Spirit begins His ministry. (Luke iv. 1, 14, 18.) Jesus was justified in the Spirit. Here the Redeemer, the same blessed Jesus, comes to those who turn from transgression in Jacob. The moral foundation is thus laid. The Redeemer meets the enemy in the truth of the salvation wrought by His own arm, and righteousness sustained Him, but with the true Israel the moral foundation in the soul is not only in this action of Jehovah's Spirit, but also in His word now confessed by their lips.

Chapter lx. Jehovah's work in Israel being thus accomplished by the Spirit and the word

(Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27), glory follows. The glory of Jehovah, which in chapter vi. discovered the uncleanness of Israel and their utterly hardened moral condition, is now their light—that in which they shine. In Romans iii. the sinner is unable to stand in the presence of the glory of God; in chapter v. 2 he rejoices in hope of it—the intervening portion gives the reason. In Isaiah it is not, as in Ezekiel, the glory of *government*—a chariot throne with *its cherubim and wheels* (compare Ezek. i. with chap. xliii. 1-7, where it is the place of Jehovah's throne and of the soles of His feet), but it is rather the *seraphic glory* as seen in chapter vi. The glory there is celebrated as being according to what *Jehovah Himself* is—"Holy, holy, holy." So here in chapter lx., "the *glory of Jehovah* is risen upon thee"—Zion is to shine in that. Darkness may cover the earth and gross darkness the peoples, but Jehovah Jesus, for surely it is He that arises on Zion, and His glory is seen on her. We have seen in chapters viii. 22 and ix. 2 how the darkness that hung over the land of Israel was illumined when Jesus in humiliation appeared in Galilee, the prelude to this illumination from the glory, when Gentiles should come to Zion's light, and kings to the brightness of her rising. This chapter should be read side by side with Revelation xxi. 9-xxii. 5, for while there is

some analogy (as it is the same blessed Person who is the light of the heavenly city that shines on Zion below), yet we have to note the contrasts—we have in verse 12 “the *nation and kingdom* that will not serve thee shall perish,” while in the heavenly city the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of *the nations*. Zion’s walls are salvation, for every enemy is not yet subjected, but the wall of the heavenly city is radiant with the divine glory which cannot be sullied. Zion’s gates are praise (Psa. c. 4), they who enter praise the God whose mercy endures for ever, but at the gates of the heavenly city the peerless and unique beauty of Christ in His saints meets the eye. Jehovah, supreme over all the earth, is Zion’s light, but God and the Lamb of Jerusalem above. Zion’s *people* are all righteous, the branch of Jehovah’s planting, but the heavenly city is *one whole*, built up in truthful righteousness and holiness—a new creation. Jerusalem on earth belongs to the peaceful sabbath of the old creation, while Jerusalem above belongs to the eighth day, the great day of the feast; but no week follows it, for all is eternal. The building up of Zion is the workmanship of Jehovah, and in His own handiwork *He will be glorified*. Jerusalem above, when measured by the golden reed of the divine glory, is absolute perfection.

The chapter concludes with the prophetic declaration, "I Jehovah will hasten it in its time."

Chapter lxi. opens with this working of Jehovah by His Spirit, not now raising a standard against evil, but as anointing Him by whom Jehovah accomplishes His pleasure—the One whom we have seen returning in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. Verses 1 and 2 are those which He read in the synagogue of Nazareth, significantly closing the book at the words, "the acceptable year of the Lord." We shall find the day of vengeance in chapter lxiii., but when that day comes the poor in spirit, the mourners in Zion, will be comforted; garments of praise will be theirs, they will be trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that He may be glorified. Such will be the effect of the acting of the Spirit of Jehovah by His anointed One. Verses 4-9 speak of the way in which Jehovah will use this restored and comforted remnant. Then in verse 10 the remnant, led by the Spirit of Christ, speak in the name of Jerusalem: "I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness"—it is what the Redeemer put on in chapter lix.—and Jerusalem will be the witness of righteousness and praise to all

nations. Compare Ezekiel xvi. 14 as to Jehovah's purpose, now made good by the power of the Spirit.

Chapter lxii. continues this purpose of Jehovah; He will not rest until Zion's righteousness and salvation go forth as brightness and as a burning lamp, and all nations and kings shall see her righteousness and glory. Instead of Zion being termed "Forsaken," and her land "Desolate," she will be called "My delight is in her," and her land "Married." It is the same blessed grace which could take a wretched malefactor from a gibbet into the paradise of God. Instead of Zion's sons wandering away because of the desolation of the land, as did Elimelech and Naomi (Ruth i. 1, 2) because of famine, now they are married to the land, and her children shall eat their own corn and drink their own wine, and praise Jehovah. To this end Jehovah is put in remembrance by the watchmen that He has established.

The word that Isaiah saw in chapter ii. 2, 3 is now to be fulfilled. The gates of Zion are open for her people, the redeemed of Jehovah, a highway is cast up and a banner lifted up for the peoples—she is called "Sought out," the "City not forsaken." Two blessed facts connected with God's purpose have come before us: that Zion, redeemed by Christ and set up

in the power of the Spirit of Jehovah which rested on Christ, should be for Jehovah's own delight, to Him she is "Hephzibah"; secondly, that all nations should learn in her His righteousness and salvation and praise—that she inherits His blessing, and that she is the habitation of righteousness, and the mountain of holiness. (Jer. xxxi. 23.)

Chapter lxiii. The prophetic Spirit now addresses the Redeemer who has come to Zion as One having come from Edom with dyed garments—glorious in His apparel. It is there that He has trampled down the last confederacy of nations against Jerusalem. It has been the day of vengeance on them, but the year of His redeemed.

But after this overthrow of the enemy we have the record of the remnant's exercises of soul (as with the brethren of Joseph when he became known to them). Their past history is gone over in the light of the multitude of Jehovah's mercies and lovingkindnesses, and of how in love and pity He had redeemed them, had been afflicted in their affliction, and had borne and carried them all the days of old. Such had He been towards them, but what had they been? They had rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, and He fought against them. But He remembered the days of Moses and His people. Had not Moses borne with them, and

interceded for them, and why? The Spirit of Jehovah was on Moses, and so did Jehovah lead His people to make Himself a glorious name. The pleading put into the mouth of the remnant by the Spirit of Christ is very beautiful. They are cast in all the sense of their sinfulness on that which is in God Himself. They cannot plead that Abraham was their father (as the Jews did in John viii.), nor do they seek to be acknowledged as of Israel, but they plead as in Hosea xiv. 3, "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

The pleading is continued in chapter lxiv. They look back to the days of old when Jehovah did terrible things, with the desire that He would rend the heavens and come down; but chapter liii. had already shewn that He had presented Himself in quite a different manner, and chapter xlii. had prophetically stated that Jehovah's Servant would not break a bruised reed, though He was the arm of Jehovah. (Compare Psa. xliv. and its answer in xlv.) What God could be for him that waited for Him to act no sense of man had ever perceived. (Ver. 4.) How blessedly was this realised by Jesus Himself, when the resurrection morning broke for Him and the glory of the Father visited His tomb. Paul enlarges on this—the Spirit revealing the things that God *has prepared* for them that love Him. The assembly

is not *waiting* for God to act. He *has acted* (far beyond all that man could conceive) in giving Him who went into the lower parts of the earth a place far above all heavens.

“The love that gives with Christ a place,
Surpasses our poor human thought.”

In verses 5 and 6 there is the contrast between what God is in His ways (“in those *is continuance*, and we shall be saved”) and that which belonged to *them*—uncleanness, and all their righteousnesses as filthy rags. In verse 8 they leave themselves entirely in the hands of Jehovah as of a Father, and they as clay in the hands of the potter. They say, as it were, Look on our desolations!

In chapter lxxv. Jehovah answers that He had been sought of those who inquired not for Him, that is, the Gentiles (compare Rom. x. 20, 21); while as to Israel, they had always been a disobedient and gainsaying people. Then follows the indictment of such a nation. The remnant, as being of Israel, had to bow to Jehovah's words and own the guiltiness of the nation—they had given up all claims as belonging to Abraham or being of Israel, and had taken the ground of mercy, mourning as they did for Israel's sins.

In verse 8 Jehovah judges “between cattle and cattle,” as Ezekiel speaks; or, as Malachi

says, "between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Jehovah owns this remnant as "my servants" and "mine elect," they shall inherit His mountains and dwell there. (Compare Ezek. xxxvi. 8-11.) Those who claimed to be the nation and had forsaken Jehovah and worshipped idols, "Gad" and "Meni" (see margin), "Fortune" and "Fate," should be numbered to the sword. Verses 13-16 continue this discernment of Jehovah between those who answered to what Israel was called to be—His servants and His elect—and the workers of evil.

Verse 17 proclaims Adonai Jehovah as the Creator of a new heavens and a new earth (Rev. xxi. i.), but as a present thing they were to rejoice in the creative power exercised in regard to Jerusalem, putting it on new ground altogether before Him. Other scriptures shew us that there will be a wonderful link established between earth and heaven, making, as it were, millennial blessing the anti-chamber to the new heavens and the new earth, when the tabernacle of God will be with men. Jerusalem will be the centre of this millennial blessing, as in Psalm cxxxiii. The lofty head of Hermon caught the dew of heaven, but it descended on the mountains of Zion. It is this link with heaven, I judge, and the glory of Jehovah arising on Zion (chap. lx.), which accounts for

the absence of any description of a temple, as so largely unfolded in Ezekiel. In the next chapter (ver. 1) Jehovah asks, *What house will ye build me?* Hath not my hand made all these things? It is a kind of reference to the universe (as in Heb. iii. 4), and the millennial city on earth basks in the light of heaven.

It cannot, however, be said, "there shall be no more death." That awaits the eternal state, for there is the possibility of sin, and Revelation xx. 7-9 shews the final working of Satan; but "as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people," and "mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." Life for evermore will be their portion as also of the elect Gentiles.

Chapter lxvi. Verse 1 carries our thoughts much higher than the privilege of Israel, even when they had the temple which Solomon built. "*Heaven* is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." It is the verse quoted by Stephen (Acts vii. 48, 50) when accused of speaking blasphemous words against "this holy place." Taught by the Spirit, Stephen introduces the quotation by saying, "Howbeit the *most High* dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet." "Most High" is the title of God as "*possessor of heaven and earth*" (Gen. xiv. 19), and in that name Melchizedec blessed Abraham when he returned from the

slaughter of the confederated kings who had taken Lot (type of Israel sunk in the world) captive. The destruction of the last confederation of nations against Israel (as in chap. lxiii.) is to the end "that men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the *most high over all the earth*," not merely over Israel. (Psa. lxxxiii. 18.) Jehovah does not here speak from the holy hill of Zion, but as from heaven. "From the height of his sanctuary, from heaven, did Jehovah behold the earth." (Psa. cii. 19.) Referring to chapter vi., there the prophet saw the Lord sitting upon a throne "*high and lifted up*"—it was only "His train" that filled the temple. In chapter xl. also the nations are but as a drop in a bucket, the princes nothing, and the judges of the earth vanity, with Him who sits on the circle of the earth and spreads out the heavens as a tent to dwell in. The New Testament opens to us a more wonderful glory. He who descended into the lower parts of the earth has ascended up *far above all heavens*, that He might fill all things, not as Creator merely but as Redeemer.

From this lofty place, whence everything is surveyed, Jehovah looks to the man who is afflicted and contrite in spirit, and that trembles at His word. The ways of the wicked, those who did evil in His eyes, are before Him. He would bring their calamities and fears upon

them. We are accustomed to speak of two classes, the righteous and the wicked, and that is right, speaking generally; but another question is raised in this concluding portion of Isaiah. Both in our Lord's day and in Stephen's day, those who claimed to have Abraham as father, and to be Moses' disciples, and to represent the nation, hated and cast out and slew both the Lord and His martyr Stephen. And here, those that trembled at Jehovah's word were hated and cast out by their brethren, who in doing so said, "Let Jehovah be glorified." In the end of John xvii. the Lord appeals to the "righteous Father," as between Himself and the world, Jew and Gentile; and here Jehovah's appearance decides the question between the wicked professors and those who trembled at His word. He appears to their joy, and their persecutors shall be ashamed. Jehovah recompenses *His* enemies be they Jews or Gentiles, and those who are the children of Zion in His eyes travail in birth, and a nation is born in a day. All that loved her are called to "Rejoice with Jerusalem, thus set up in resurrection power; they shall be satisfied with her consolations, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. Peace like a river is extended to her, and this godly remnant shall be comforted in Jerusalem. The hand of the Lord shall be known as *toward*

His servants, and His indignation towards His enemies."

But there is not only this righteous judgment between that which is spurious and that which is real, but by fire and by His sword Jehovah will enter into judgment with "*all flesh*," the slain will be many, and the workers of abomination will perish. It is the judgment of the living, a judgment often forgotten and ignored. The time also had come for the gathering of all nations and tongues to come and see Jehovah's glory. The escaped remnant of Israel will be sent among the Gentiles to declare His fame, and from all parts their scattered brethren—those who had slept in the dust of the earth—are brought as an offering to Jehovah (compare chap. xviii. 7), and they become, according to God's intention, a priestly nation. (Compare Exo. xix. 5, 6.) This is anticipated in Christianity. (1 Peter ii. 9.)

Compare verse 22 with Psalm cxxxiii. 3, "life for evermore." In the Revelation (chap. xxi. 3) we have not only the tabernacle of God—the heavenly part, but those who are *His people* for the new earth. In the last two verses Jehovah still speaks from His throne high and lifted up. "All flesh," not Israel merely, "shall come to worship before me." (Compare Zech. xiv. 16.) And "all flesh" shall have before their eyes an abiding wit-

ness of God's judgment on rebellion against Him.

It is interesting to consider other passages in which the words "all flesh" are used. "The end of *all flesh* is come before me"; "for *all flesh* had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. vi. 12, 13); "*All flesh* is grass" (Isa. xl. 6); "the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed and *all flesh* shall see it together" (ver. 5); "I will pour out my spirit upon *all flesh*" (Joel ii. 28); "Let *all flesh* bless his holy name for ever and ever" (Psa. cxlv. 21); and again, "As thou hast given him power over *all flesh*, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." (John xvii. 2.)

Thus Isaiah closes with the gathering of all nations and tongues to see the glory of Jehovah, and "all flesh" coming to worship before Him in "the beauty of holiness." (Psa. xcvi. 9.) I close with a word on the marvellous grace of God, which pursues its way through the ages, gathering material both for heaven and earth, so that the outgoing of His heart may be satisfied, not only in pouring out on both the earthly and heavenly companies His richest blessing, but in dwelling among them, so that He may fill all with His own fulness in Christ.



JEREMIAH. (MAY JAH ESTABLISH.)

IN Isaiah we have considered a far-reaching and wide-embracing "*Vision*" of Jehovah's dealing with Judah and Jerusalem right up *to the end*. To Jeremiah was specially given the *word* of Jehovah in its application *to the times in which he lived* (though the new covenant which God would consummate with Israel and Judah when regathered forms part of his prophecy). Those times were marked by the breaking up and destruction of Jerusalem, and the entire desolation of the land. This involved the judgment of the system of nations in the midst of which God had placed Israel with Jerusalem as a centre—a *period* which continues until restored Israel becomes again God's centre in the earth. (Compare chap. xxv. 32, 33 with Matt. xxiv. 7.) Hence Jeremiah is appointed "a prophet to the nations." (Vers. 5-10.) This will come before us in chapter xxv., where Jerusalem and Judah are no longer treated as God's people, but as one with the heathen nations, and Jehovah was watchful over His word at Jeremiah's mouth to perform it. (Ver. 12.) Evil would break out from the north against Jerusalem, and though the kings and princes and priests and the people would

fight against the prophet (as they afterwards did against Christ), yet they should not prevail, Jehovah would sustain and deliver him. With the blessed Lord the deliverance was out of death itself by resurrection power. With the prophet, though he sank in deep mire, in a horrible pit, yet his deliverance therefrom was that of the spared remnant. (Compare chap. xxxviii. 6 with Psa. xl. 2.)

We may regard chapter i. as a preface. We do not find in Jeremiah the introduction of Christ personally into the midst of Israel as Emmanuel, or as Jehovah's perfect Servant, the pure vessel of Jehovah's Spirit, nor the history of His rejection and death, nor atonement. There was, so to speak, no nation for Messiah to come to. There is the promise of a righteous Branch being raised up to David (chap. xxiii. 5-6), and we have the Spirit of Christ in the prophet sorrowing deeply for the sins of the people while warning them of imminent judgment, and on Jehovah's part denouncing the evil which would bring the judgment. Often the weakness and imperfection of the vessel becomes apparent, though the Spirit of Christ wrought in it.

Chapters ii.-iv. engage our attention first. The time was that of Josiah—a time of revival *historically* and outwardly through the faithfulness of *the king* (chap. iii. 6), but verse 10

discovers the state of *the people*. Judah had not turned to Jehovah with her whole heart, *but feignedly*, or in falsehood. It is to such a people—to Jerusalem—that Jehovah sends His word. "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. Israel was holiness unto Jehovah, and the firstfruits of his increase." Had Jehovah changed to them? What iniquity, He asks, had their fathers found in Him, that they had gone far from Him? Neither did they say, "Where is Jehovah that brought us up out of the land of Egypt?" and brought them into a plentiful land. Compare with this Judges vi. 8-14, and note how Gideon with an exercised heart asks of the angel, "*Did not Jehovah bring us up from Egypt?*" A prophet had been sent to Israel with this message from Jehovah: "*I brought you up from Egypt . . . and I said unto you, I am Jehovah your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.*" The God of Israel was the God who brought them up out of Egypt, and faith in Gideon recognised this (though his faith was feeble), and so regarded the God of Israel. Israel was His people. He had redeemed them from the house of bondage that they might be His, and faith can ever

reckon thus, whatever the need. Christians are those "who by him [Jesus] do *believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.*" (1 Peter i. 21.) Hence Peter can further speak of Him as the "*God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.*" It is God thus known that faith now looks to.

But *Israel* had committed two evils; they had forsaken Jehovah, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns—broken cisterns that could hold no water. Note the difference between "a fountain"—a perennial stream—and a cistern the work of their own hands. Jehovah was forsaken and Egypt trusted. Strangers were loved (Jehovah was no Stranger-God), and the people determined to go after them. Again, Jehovah pleads through the prophet, "Have I been a wilderness to Israel?" To turn from Him was to go after folly and make themselves vile with evil. Later on (Heb. iii.) the warning is addressed to those of Israel who did believe in the God who had wrought salvation by Jesus: "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief *in departing from the living God.*" This is always the tendency of the natural heart from Adam downwards, until it issues finally in the desposal of grace.

Again Jehovah pleads (chap. iii. 4): "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?" It is an allusion to chapter ii. 2. In their youth they went after Jehovah in the wilderness. Would they not at that time own Him as their guide? Jehovah then shews that the putting away of *Israel* had not had any effect on Judah (compare 2 Kings xvii. 23), and He then addresses a word to *Israel*. "Return, thou backsliding Israel . . . I am merciful . . . Only acknowledge thine iniquity . . . Turn, O backsliding children . . . for I am married unto you." As the returning prodigal could bring nothing with him to his father but his sins, yet found all he needed in his father's arms and house, so would Jehovah be to Israel, and they should say, "My father," and not turn away. Chapter iv. shews that it is not to be a mere turning *from* evil ways, but *to* Jehovah. "If thou wilt return, O Israel . . . *return unto me.*" Besides the pleadings of Jehovah's lovingkindness, there are the urgings connected with judgment near at hand. The lion had already left his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles was on his way; the prophet, pained at heart, could not hold his peace, for he had heard the alarm of war. A vision of desolation filled his eye, yet Jehovah would not make a full end. There is not much room for exposition—what is needed

by us is sensibility as to the profanation of the name and character of Jehovah by the people whom in love He had drawn after Himself, and as to the necessity of the judgment which was about to fall on them. Jehovah could not be indifferent to evil, and if entreaties and warnings would not turn them from it, He must purge it by the fire of His judgment.

We may call chapters v. and vi. the indictment of Jerusalem and of Israel. Had there been a man in Jerusalem (chap. v.) who would execute judgment and seek truth, then Jerusalem would have been pardoned. The poor knew not the way of the Lord, and the great had altogether broken the yoke—they had utterly forsaken the Lord and committed abomination. How could He pardon? Judgment would come, but again it is said, “I will not make a full end with you.” Chapter vi. continues the indictment with its sentence of judgment—oppression, wickedness, violence and spoil were in the midst of Jerusalem. The word of the Lord was a reproach with them. The least to the greatest, the prophet and the priest, all dealt falsely. To exhortations they replied, “We will not hear.” They are tested, and found to be “reprobate silver”—those rejected by Jehovah.

Chapters vii.–ix. Not in the streets of Jerusalem, but in the gate of Jehovah’s house,

the prophet had to stand and speak His word. "Amend your ways and your doings . . . confide ye not in words of falsehood, saying [thrice over], Jehovah's temple is this" [building]. They walked after abominations, and then came and stood before Jehovah in the house called by His name, saying, "We are delivered to do all these abominations." Jehovah then asks, "Is this house, called by my name, a den of robbers in your eyes?" (In Matt. xxi. 13 the Lord asserts that *they had* made it so.) Jehovah announces (ver. 14), "I will do to this house, which is called by my name, *wherein ye trust* . . . as I have done to Shiloh." The ark had then been carried into the battlefield, "that it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." (1 Sam. iv. 3.) But the ark of God was taken captive and never went back to Shiloh. (Psa. lxxviii. 60.) But this dealing of God was a parable, a dark saying, to Israel by the Psalmist (ver. 2) ; and again, in Jeremiah's day ; as afterwards when the Lord was on earth. (Matt. xiii. 35.) Verses 22, 23 bring out the truth that to obey is better than sacrifice. Exodus xix. 5, 6 was said before Leviticus i.-iv., when the system of sacrifices was instituted. The people were taken into covenant *on the principle of obedience*. *Afterwards approach to God* was (as in the day of Abel) by sacrifice. It must ever be so.

A question is asked (chap. viii. 4) which was equivalent to saying, Do men fall and not get up again; do they turn away and not return? But with the people of Jerusalem there was *perpetual backsliding*; they let the time of Jehovah's longsuffering pass, and the cry arises, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Why should it be so? Was there no balm in Gilead, no physician there? Why was not health restored?

The sense of this taken home to the prophet's soul causes his grief to burst forth. (Chap. ix. 1.) It was the Spirit of Christ in the prophet as afterwards He Himself wept over guilty Jerusalem. (Luke xix. 41, 44.) But what perfection in *His* sorrow! Compare verses 3-5 with Micah vii. 5, 6 and Matthew x. 35, 36—there is utter want of confidence between man and man—peaceable speaking, but laying wait in heart. "Shall I not visit them for these things? saith Jehovah: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" The whole land would become desolation, and Jerusalem heaps, because of the stubbornness of their heart. The chapter closes with the exhortation, "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things

I delight, saith Jehovah." What man could boast in, let it be put aside. (Compare Phil. iii. 8.) But Israel were uncircumcised in heart, and Jehovah would punish them with the uncircumcised nations around.

Chapter x. Jehovah continues his exhortation to the nation uncircumcised in heart, "Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven." The nations associated these signs with their idols—idols that must be borne because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them. Then the prophet asks, "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain," that is, fear. (Compare Rev. xv. 3, 4, where it should read, "King of nations.") Then follows magnificent pleading for Jehovah as against idols, concluding, "The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: Jehovah of hosts is his name." In verses 23–25 Jeremiah speaks, as bowing under the chastening hand of God, and yet pleading with Him on behalf of Israel, as one associating himself with the consequences of their sin, "Jehovah, *correct me*, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." On the nations that knew Him not and had eaten up Jacob, he calls for Jehovah's anger to be poured out.

Chapters xi., xii. Jerusalem and Judah are charged with *refusal to hear the words of the covenant of God*—they served other gods and set up altars to “that shameful thing”—even to Baal. Note, that all these chapters refer to the time of Josiah, and that the finding of the book of the law in his day (2 Chron. xxxiv. 15, 29-32) led to the king and the people making a covenant before Jehovah to keep His commandments, and to *perform the words of the covenant* written in the book which had been read to them. So that refusal to hear the words (ver. 10) and setting up altars to burn incense to Baal was doubly wicked, and Jeremiah is told not to “pray for this people,” for Jehovah would not hear, and He asks “What hath my beloved to do in my house?”* In verses 18-20 the prophet anticipates in his measure some of the sorrows of Christ, but with a call for vengeance which was not found on the lips of Jesus. Note in Psalm xxi. how *the prophetic Spirit* speaks to Messiah of the day of His anger, when His enemies should be made as a fiery oven, but Messiah does not speak *personally*, as in Psalm xxii., when, atonement having been wrought, He says, “*I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in*

* We may ask, What has “the form of godliness without the power” to do in the house of God—the assembly of the living God?

the midst of the congregation *will I* praise thee."

Yet in chapter xii. the prophet pleads with Jehovah as to His judgments, and gets the reply (ver. 5), "What wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" when the full torrent of Jehovah's dealings came on them. Then we have a mingling of love and sorrow, for the Spirit of Christ speaks through the prophet, "I have forsaken my house I have given *the beloved of my soul* into the hand of her enemies." In verses 14, 15 there is a reference to chapter i. 10. The house of Judah would be plucked up with their evil neighbours and afterwards plucked out from among those evil neighbours and brought back; and if these neighbours would learn the ways of His people, as before they had taught His people to swear by Baal, then they should be built up in the midst of Jehovah's people, but if not, plucked up.

Chapter xiii. This is a figurative action—two weary journeys to Euphrates—by which is pointed out that Israel (whom Jehovah had taken up in order that they should cleave to Him, as a girdle cleaves to the loins of a man, that they might be for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory) should go to the Euphrates—that is, to Babylon—and there have their pride marred and spoiled as

the linen girdle had been. They are besought to give ear, for Jehovah had spoken. (Vers. 15, 16.) If not, the prophet's soul would weep in secret places for their pride; yea, weep sore because *Jehovah's flock* is carried away captive. How faithful was Jehovah to the people He loved as His flock, and the prophet's soul felt the sin. Compare Revelation iii. 19, where Jesus stands outside the door of the unfaithful church, saying, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

Chapters xiv., xv. Because of sufferings from drought the cry of Jerusalem went up. It was the first chastisement threatened if God's statutes were despised and His covenant broken. (Lev. xxvi. 19, 20.) Jeremiah again pleads with Jehovah on their behalf, but the terrible answer is, "Pray not for this people for their good. . . . I will not hear their cry." Again the plea is made, "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? Doth thy soul loathe Zion?" Jeremiah, moved by the Spirit of Christ, identifies himself with the sins of the people. "For thy name's sake, do not spurn *us* . . . Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? . . . art not thou *HE* [the same], Jehovah *our* God? therefore *we* will wait upon thee."

Jehovah replies (chap. xv.), "Though Moses and Samuel [the two great intercessors on

Israel's behalf] stood before me, my soul would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight." If they asked, Whither? To God's four sore judgments. Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, had cast off God, and the people went on with it. In verse 10 the prophet laments his position, and herein we see the weakness of man in contrast to the blessed Lord; his standing for God made him a man of strife and contention, every one cursing him, but Jehovah speaks. "Verily I will set thee free for thy good; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee kindly in the time of evil." (Chap. xxxix. 11, 12.) Jeremiah represents here the remnant who bow to Jehovah, as well as being the prophet in contention with the evil of the people. We are not here on christian ground (ver. 15), but on that of the Jewish remnant calling for vengeance on their persecutors, as in the Psalms. (See Psa. xlv. 13, 22.) "For thy sake" they had suffered persecution. The words of Jehovah had *been found* (2 Chron. xxxiv. 15) and fed upon, and had become the joy and rejoicing of the prophet's heart, and speaking for the remnant, the true Israel, he says, "I am called by thy name, Jehovah God of hosts"; he is consequently entirely separated from mockers. Would Jehovah fail him? In verse 19 Jehovah answers, there must not only be sitting apart from evil, but *return to*

Jehovah (chap. iv. 1), if so, then "I will bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me." It is a divine principle for "*to-day*." ("To-day if ye will hear his voice.") Then, "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." It belongs to God only to take the vile from the precious. (See Matt. xiii. 47-50.) The *fishermen* gather the good, the *angels* sever the wicked from the just. The prophet had to own everything that was precious to *Jehovah*. (2 Tim. ii. 21, 22.) Another principle of action is indicated. "Let them return to thee; but return not thou unto them." (Compare 2 Tim. ii. 21; iii. 5.)

In this we get illustrated the scope of the prophetic office. God uses it to recall His people to the original standing or covenant, and upholds it, but also it introduces on God's part the testimony to His own character and glory, which judges the departure from the standing, but sets before those who have ears to hear the resource that there in is God Himself, though floods of evil may be around. In this path of confidence in God He will sustain the faithful. (Vers. 20, 21.)

Chapters xvi., xvii. The name of Jerusalem is dropped, and the term "this place" is substituted. The prophet was not to marry or have sons or daughters *there*. *Jehovah's* peace was taken away from the people who dwelt

there, His lovingkindness and tender mercies—terrible condition into which they would fall for forsaking Him! The prophet's eye is directed to days yet to come, when Israel should be sought for and recovered from the lands whither they had been driven, and nations should come from the ends of the earth and learn the name of "Jehovah." But in chapter xvii. the culmination of Jehovah's indictment of Israel by the prophet is given. The sin of Judah is said to be written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond, both on their heart and on the horns of their altars. They had "kindled a fire in mine anger" which should burn for ever. In the midst of such a state of things *Jehovah speaks*, and they are words for all ages. "Cursed the man that trusteth in man." Blessed the man that confides in Jehovah. (Compare Psa. i.) Jehovah continues: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it? I Jehovah search the heart." Man can only see the actions of men, but Jehovah searches the motives of the heart from which they spring. But above and beyond all the evil searched out in man is Jehovah Himself, and His glorious throne on high is the place of Israel's sanctuary. He Himself was Israel's hope—the fountain of living waters, all that forsook Him would be ashamed. The prophet,

linking himself with the hope of Israel, utters the cry of the faithful, "Heal me, Jehovah, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for *thou* art my praise." The ungodly nation say, "Where is the word of Jehovah? *let it come now.*" The patience of God that waited and warned was despised.

Hallowing the sabbath day becomes the test both to the king and to the people entering the gates of Jerusalem—whether they were bent on *their own business*, or on the service of thanksgiving and praise to Jehovah. It was one of two things, either Jerusalem established as the centre of holy worship and thanksgiving for the whole land (Psa. cxxii. 4), or given up to the fire of God's judgment.

Chapters xviii., xix. The prophet in the potter's house learns the sovereignty of Jehovah: "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand." There is again a reference to chapter i. 10, but His sovereignty is in accord with His holy judgment of good and evil. (Vers. 7-12.) Would they turn from their evil ways? They said, "There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices." Sad and solemn position! The prophet's words and warnings make the guilty, hopeless people devise devices against him. He appeals to Jehovah. Verse 20 breathes somewhat of the

sorrows of Christ. (Psa. cix. 5.) The prophet was associated with the *word and name* of Jehovah (chap. xv. 16), hence devices against the prophet were devices against Jehovah Himself. Moreover, it was the rejection of mercy, recompensing evil for good.

In chapter xix. the subject of the potter's earthen vessel is continued in answer to the prophet's call for judgment. The wickedness of the kings and inhabitants of Jerusalem is enumerated, and the prophet breaks the vessel that it cannot be made whole again, as a witness of the terrible judgment that should take place in the valley of the son of Hinnom or Tophet, so terrible that it should be called "the valley of slaughter." For this declaration of judgment Jeremiah is put in the stocks by the chief officer of Jehovah's house. So much was he in reproach that he says he will speak no more in Jehovah's name: but so was he identified with *Jehovah's word* that speak he must, and Jehovah upholds him against his persecutors. In this we see again the weakness of the vessel, as compared with our blessed Lord praying for them.

Chapters xxi.—xxiii. refer to Zedekiah's reign, when Nebuchadnezzar, the instrument of God's judgment, was making war with Jerusalem. The king sends to the prophet to inquire of Jehovah as to it. The answer is,

that He would turn back their weapons of war, and would Himself fight against them. The prophet sets before them the way of life and death. To submit to the Chaldeans would be life, to resist, death. In verse 11 the house of David is addressed. First, generally as to executing justice and righteousness, were it so, it would avert the judgment. In chapter xxii. the house of David is judged more in detail. Shallum (or Jehoahaz), taken captive by Pharaoh to Egypt; Coniah (or Jeconiah or Jehoiachin), taken captive to Babylon and dying there. Against him the word is spoken, "Write ye this man childless," that is, with regard to sitting *on the throne* of David; and remark that in the genealogy of our Lord (Matt. i.) that Jehoiakim is omitted. He had been made king *by Gentile power*, and Coniah (or Jeconiah) continues the *line* of David, but the *throne* of David is for ever closed to his seed—the *natural* line of royalty in David *is closed*. (Psa. lxxxix. 44.) It is taken up in Christ. (Luke i. 32.)

In chapter xxiii., woe having been pronounced on the shepherds of Israel, for they had only scattered the flock (compare Ezek. xxxiv.)—"the sheep of *my pasture*," the godly in Israel—Jehovah Himself would *gather them*—the remnant whom He owned. On the return from captivity there was no *throne* of David's house to be a shelter for them, the

Gentiles *ruled* over them. (Neh. ix. 36, 37.) When Christ came He *gathered* the remnant around Him. The scribes and Pharisees (self-constituted pastors) did not gather with Christ but scattered. (Luke xi. 23.) But the days would come when Jehovah would raise up to David a King who should reign and prosper; His name, Jehovah Tzidkenu, the Lord our righteousness; in His days Judah should be saved and Israel dwell safely. It is the same blessed Christ who is *our* righteousness in the presence of God. In verse 9 the prophets are exposed, they neither had the word of Jehovah nor were they in the secret of His counsel. (Amos iii. 7.) Had it been so, they would have caused Jehovah's people to turn from their evil way, for His word would make itself felt, penetrating as fire, and powerful even to breaking the rock in pieces. (Ver. 29.) They had perverted His word, and everlasting shame was their portion.

Under the figure of two baskets of figs shewn to him by the Lord—one very good, the other worthless—Jeremiah is taught that those who had been taken captive to Babylon with Jeconiah—*sent there by Jehovah for their good*—He would acknowledge and bring them again to the land of Israel. Jeconiah was of the legal line of David, and had subjected himself to Nebuchadnezzar, while Zedekiah, made king

by Nebuchadnezzar, refused to submit to him, and would with his princes and those left in Jerusalem be scattered hither and thither, with no hope of restoration. In Zedekiah *set up by Gentile power* there is a foreshadowing of the apostate king of the last days. This brings us to the culminating point of Jeremiah's prophecy.

Chapter xxv. For twenty-three years Jehovah had spoken to Judah and Jerusalem to turn them from their evil and idolatrous way, but they had not hearkened. Hence Nebuchadnezzar is sent against them, and the nations round about them, to destroy them. Israel, taken captive, should serve the king of Babylon seventy years, and after the seventy years the king of Babylon himself should be punished. (Compare ver. 26.) Israel ceases to be a nation before God—His people—and is now reckoned as one of the heathen nations to whom the wine-cup of God's anger is sent. It is given to Judah and Jerusalem first, then to the other nations, and finally to the king of Sheshach, that is, Babylon last. Here we find ourselves in times that stretch out to the last days, when Jehovah will have a controversy with the nations and will plead with all flesh. Evil goes forth from nation to nation. (Compare Matt. xxiv. 7; Luke xxi. 10.) The storm of judgment deals with them all (Joel ii. 1; iii.

12-14), and the woe pronounced on the shepherds is accomplished.

Chapter xxvi. goes back to the beginning of Jehoakim's reign. It records the word of the prophet—standing in the court of Jehovah's house by His command—that if those who came to worship there would not listen to Jehovah's servants, the prophets, then He would make that house like Shiloh. (Compare chap. vii. 12-14; Psa. lxxviii. 60.) Jehovah protects the prophet against the malice of the priests.

Chapter xxvii. If we compare verse 1 with verses 3 and 12 it is probably in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah. Under the figure of yokes sent to the various nations by the hand of those messengers who had come from them to Zedekiah, by the word of Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, these nations are commanded to submit themselves to the yoke of the king of Babylon. It was the way of peace for them as well as for Zedekiah, who had already taken an oath of fealty to Nebuchadnezzar, but was deceived by false prophets, who said that the vessels of Jehovah's house should shortly come again from Babylon. If they were true prophets, they would make intercession to Jehovah that the *remaining* vessels should not go there. Jehovah's word by Jeremiah was that all that were left should be carried there,

for He well knew the perversity of the people and the weakness and folly of the king's heart that could not trust Him. At Babylon should all remain until the day when Jehovah should bring them again to their place. Thus in chapter xxvi. we have the pleadings of God, and in chapter xxvii. the certainty of His judgment according to His word.

In chapter xxviii. an apostate prophet (for "there were false prophets among the people") declares that within two years all should be brought back from Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar's yoke broken. Jehovah's word was that instead of the yoke of wood broken by the false prophet, there should be yokes of iron, and Hananiah dies under the judgment of God. The way of peace was in quiet submission to the chastening hand of God. In chapter xxix. the prophet writes to the captives in Babylon exhorting to this. They were to build houses in Babylon, and seek the peace of the city where they were captive, and pray for it, for "in the peace thereof they should have peace." (Compare 1 Tim. ii. 2.) They would be seventy years in Babylon, and not till then brought back, for Jehovah's thoughts as to them were thoughts of peace, not of evil, to give them hope in the end. Isaiah xl. anticipates this "end of the Lord." But the rebellion of those left in Jerusalem, fostered by false prophets,

ends in condign punishment. The prophecy of Jeremiah has brought us now to the point of Israel in the captivity of Babylon for seventy years, and an expected end given to them.

But in chapter xxx. so surely as Jehovah's words as to their captivity should come to pass—and *Jeremiah is directed to write these words in a book*—so surely would the days come when Jehovah would turn the captivity of both Israel and Judah. There would be the return of the captivity of *Jerusalem* after seventy years, but what is spoken of here is for the last days, the turning of the captivity of *the whole nation*, and their return *to the land given to their fathers that they should possess it*. This did not take place after the seventy years. (See Neh. ix. 36, 37.) When this takes place it will be the time of *Jacob's* trouble, so that none is like it. Matthew xxiv. 21 is that part of it which affects Jerusalem specially. It is the day of greatest distress, but he (Jacob) shall be saved out of it. Ezekiel xx. 34-38 speaks of God's dealings to regather *Israel* "with fury poured out,"* the yoke should be removed, and they

* It is clear from Revelation xii. that the casting down of Satan from heaven becomes the occasion of his persecuting the woman (Israel). His accusation of the heavenly saints being over, all his malice is against Israel. The woman flees, but he makes war with the remnant of her seed.

should know the liberty of serving Jehovah their God, and David their king raised up to them.

Verses 12-15 shew their desperate condition—a state that no one but Jehovah could meet. “*Thou* hast no healing medicines” is said to them. “*I* will restore health unto thee, and *I* will heal thee of thy wounds, *saith Jehovah.*” As with the prodigal, absolute destitution causes him to say, “I will arise, and go to my father,” so the depth of Israel’s misery will bring them into the arms of Jehovah’s mercy. Strangers will no more rule over them, their prince shall be of themselves—one that has engaged his heart to draw near to Jehovah. Who is that One? The answer is found in Jesus, of the seed of David according to the flesh. The result is, “Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” Verses 23 and 24 describe the sweeping storm of judgment on the wicked and the full carrying out of Jehovah’s purpose in Israel.

In chapter xxxi. this purpose is definitely stated. “At that time”—the time of Jacob’s trouble and deliverance—Jehovah will be the God of all the families of Israel. The sword had done its work, and the remnant left of the sword, as of old, found grace in their wilderness condition, but this remnant is the true Israel. (Hosea ii. 14.) The prophet, speaking in the name of Israel, says, “Jehovah hath appeared

from afar unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Then follows a beautiful description of the way in which Jehovah would lead them and cause them to walk by waterbrooks in a straight way, where they should not stumble. The Gentiles, and the isles afar, are to hear of Jehovah's redemption of His people. And note, that Israel, who forsook Zion in Rehoboam's day, now go up thither and sing aloud upon its height. They would be satisfied with Jehovah's goodness. Thus far is *Jehovah's* restoration.

In verse 15 the Spirit turns to *Israel*. There had been bitter sorrow and bereavement, of which Matthew ii. 16-18 was a foretaste, but "there is hope for thy latter end" was Jehovah's word to them, for *He had heard* the bitter lamentation. Rachel's children should come again to their own border. Moreover (ver. 18) *He had heard* Ephraim bemoaning himself. What tenderness does it bring forth—"Is Ephraim a dear son to me? Is he a child of delights?" I will certainly have mercy upon him, saith Jehovah. Compare with this expression of tenderness the beautiful pathway of Jesus down to Jordan, in order to meet and take up those who were confessing their sins. (Matt. iii. 13-17.) In verse 21 *Israel* is

exhorted to set up waymarks, and to set the heart toward the highway, and to backslide no longer. In verse 23 *Judah* is in question, and is addressed as "the habitation of righteousness, and the mountain of holiness." In verse 27 Jehovah brings forth a new generation, and makes with the house of Israel and the house of Judah a new covenant. (Ver. 31.) In it no demand is made on them, but Jehovah undertakes for them. He will put His law into their inward parts and write it in their hearts. The result of this divine work in their souls is that they know Jehovah from the least to the greatest, and their sins are forgiven—they start again, so to speak, as a forgiven people. Christians have *the spirit* of this covenant—*Christ* written on the fleshy table of the heart; the glory of God known as shining in the face of Jesus, and the conscience perfected for ever as to sins through the one offering of Jesus. The continuity of the ordinances of the heaven is given as a pledge of Jehovah's faithfulness. The building of the city is foretold, and its holy character asserted and assured.

Chapter xxxii. gives to Jeremiah, and to us, a beautiful confirmation of the promised restoration of Jerusalem. The King of Babylon's army was already besieging the city, the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison,

and the certainty of the desolation pronounced by Jehovah—could circumstances be more unfavourable? Yet Jeremiah is directed to buy a field of his nephew, as having the right of redemption (a foreshadowing of the right of Christ). The prophet obeys, and at the word of Jehovah Baruch is directed to preserve the subscribed and sealed evidence in an earthen vessel, to continue *many days*—for the word of Jehovah of hosts was, “Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.” In Christ are the sure mercies of David, and the right of redemption from the hand of the enemy is His. Jeremiah’s prayer and the Lord’s answer and covenant speak of these mercies.

Chapter xxxiii. opens out this covenant and foretells the raising up of the Branch of righteousness to David, consequently *Jerusalem* is named of *Him* (the Branch of chap. xxiii.), “Jehovah our righteousness,” so completely is her righteousness of Him—Jesus in resurrection, who has redeemed her. Moreover, the covenant confirmed to Noah on the ground of sacrifice (Gen. viii. 21, 22)—day and night witnessing the faithfulness of God—assures His covenant with David as King and with the Levites, the priests, who minister to Jehovah. Infidelity in Israel might say that the Lord had cast off the two families which He had chosen (compare Rom. xi. 1), but it was

despising *Jehovah's people*. A word for us in these last days: we may see the ruin and havoc wrought by Satan and men, but faith regards the assembly as *God's*, and as loved by *Christ*, and infallibly to be with Christ in glory. Here we may say the strictly prophetic words of Jeremiah close. Historic details follow.

In contrast with the unbreakable covenant of Jehovah, of which the ordinances of the heavens were daily witness, in chapter xxxiv. is given the wickedness of the people of Jerusalem, who, after making a solemn covenant before the Lord to let their bondservants go free in the year of release, compelled them to return to servitude, and the king failed to enforce the covenant. Jehovah proclaimed to such a generation liberty to the sword, the pestilence and famine, and the city should be taken and burned with fire. Compare the Lord's words: "This is an evil generation." (Luke xi. 29.) While in the history of the Rechabites (chap. xxxv.), who kept the commandment of their father, another and obedient generation is brought forward. To them the word of Jehovah, *the God of Israel*, was that there should not fail a man of *that family* to stand before Him for ever, while upon the disobedient generation in Jerusalem and Judah all the evil would come that Jehovah had pronounced.

Then follows in chapter xxxvi. *the record* in writing by Baruch at the mouth of Jeremiah of all the words that Jehovah had spoken against Israel, and Judah and the nations. Baruch read it in the temple (for Jeremiah was shut up), and afterwards it was read before the king, who burnt it. Another roll was written and many other words added thereto.

The following chapters give the details of the last days of the city, and its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar—the putting of Jeremiah into a dungeon, being accused of weakening the hands of those who tried to defend the city, and his deliverance by means of an Ethiopian eunuch—then the rebellion of those left on the land to till it, and their despisal of Jeremiah's word from the Lord to abide in the land and *not to fear the king of Babylon*. They refused the word and would go down to Egypt, thus bringing on the land its complete and thorough desolation, and full and complete judgment on a perverse generation.

In chapters xlii.-li. the details are given of the cup of Jehovah's anger mentioned in chapter xxv., as sent to the nations—Jerusalem and Judah had already drunk of it, yet mercy rejoices against judgment. (Chap. xlii. 27, 28.) Jacob shall return; Jehovah would not make a full end of them, as He would of the nations, but He would correct them with judgment.

Jehovah's word was against Egypt, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon and Edom, Kedar, Elam, and at last Babylon or Sheshach, as in chapter xxv. There was thus the complete break up of the system of nations ordered by God, according to Deuteronomy xxxii. 8, in order to make way for Babylon's universal supremacy, given by God to Nebuchadnezzar when His throne was no longer at Jerusalem. The prophet had the words against Babylon written in a book by Seraiah, who, when he came to Babylon in the fourth year of Zedekiah, was commanded to read it, and to bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates, saying, "Thus shall Babylon sink and not rise."

Chapter lii. is identical with 2 Kings xxv. The fall of Babylon is the occasion for the restoration of a remnant to Jerusalem. Cyrus, who overthrew Babylon's power, making the decree for their return. Though Jeremiah does not look on to the last days as Isaiah had done, but *fills up the gap while Israel is in captivity*, yet doubtless the destruction of the last head of Gentile power will make room for the final restoration of Israel as the centre of God's government in the earth. Thus we may regard Babylon's destruction as a foreshadowing of the future, though it is not the prophet's subject.

EZEKIEL. (MAY GOD STRENGTHEN.)

THIS prophet was of priestly lineage, for if Israel was a nation in which God had set His throne and government, it was also a people in whose midst He had planted His sanctuary that He might dwell among them. Ezekiel, a captive, not in Babylon but in Chaldea, by the river Chebar, is given to see the likeness of the glory of Jehovah (ver. 28), no longer *at rest* on the ark of the covenant (2 Chron. vi. 41), but seated on a kind of chariot-throne, and coming from the way of the north, in stormy wind, and cloud and fire; not only cherubim, as on the ark, but wheels also; above them the firmament; and above that in the glowing brightness as of amber and a sapphire stone, the appearance of a man—for it is in man that God will and does reveal Himself in judgment (John v. 27; Acts xvii. 31); and, blessed be His name, in grace. (John i. 17, 18.) Though the fire of judgment is manifested, yet there is the appearance also of the bow in the cloud in the day of rain. God will judge the works of men, but He is faithful to His covenant with creation. In chapter xliii. 3 the prophet speaks of this vision of the glory as coming *to destroy*

the city. The instrument was Nebuchadnezzar, but behind the instrument the prophet is instructed in the holy and righteous ways of God. At the sight of the vision Ezekiel fell on his face and then *heard the voice of one who spoke*. He is addressed by the voice, not as an Israelite, but as a "son of man." He is, so to speak, outside of Israel in the mind of God, he is not even part of the captivity in Babylon, as was Daniel. The glory-cloud was also outside, and *he is sent to the children of Israel—to nations* (Israel and Judah) that are rebellious—with this word, "Thus saith Adonai Jehovah,"* and whether they would hear or forbear, they should know that God's words had been spoken to them. So men now have had the word of God as the testimony of Jesus. What have they done with it? How is it received?

A roll of a book is then spread out before the prophet, lamentations and mourning and woe being written therein—the prophet had to eat it—the meaning of this is given in chapter iii. 10, "Son of man, all my words . . . *receive in thy heart*, and hear with thy ears"; and whether they would hear or forbear, tell them, "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah." Then,

* This name is used largely in this book, translated "Lord God." It is not exactly the covenant name with *Israel*, but Jehovah as *Lord of all*.

amidst the rushing movement of the cherubim and wheels, a voice celebrates the glory of Jehovah from His place. (Compare Isa. vi. 3, but there is no rushing sound there, the glory was still at rest, but ready to depart.)

After seven days of astonishment, Ezekiel is appointed a *watchman* to the house of Israel. The glory-chariot was moving in judgment—it was at the door, and the prophet bears to them the message of *life or death*. (Compare with this Paul in 2 Cor. ii., but in that passage known in the truth of the cross.) In delivering the message the prophet would deliver his own soul. For a time the prophet is made dumb towards them, and not a reprover, *for they were rebellious*. When Jehovah opened his mouth he was to say, “Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; he that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are *a rebellious house*.” In this and the following chapter Jehovah is speaking *to the prophet* from the chariot-throne of glory. In chapters iv.–vii. Jerusalem, the mountains of Israel, and the land, are addressed from thence in judgment.

Through a painful experience the prophet is made to realise the horrors of a siege, though himself far away from the besieged city, and in chapter v. the effects of the siege, the subsequent scattering, and Jehovah’s fourfold

judgments are given. The reason was, that the Lord Jehovah had set *Jerusalem* in the midst of the nations, and instead of being a witness to them (see Deut. iv. 7, 8) she had done worse than the heathen, and had defiled the Lord Jehovah's sanctuary with their detestable things and abominations. In chapter vi. the *mountains*, whence sprang the rivers "that run among the hills" (Psa. civ. 10), had become the place where they set up their sun-images and served their idols (see chap. xxxvi. for the restoration of the mountains); and in chapter vii. the end comes upon the four corners of *the land*, for it was full of bloody crimes. The result of these judgments would be that the hand which smote them would be recognised as *Jehovah's*.

In chapter viii. the scene changes, and the prophet no longer hears the *words of God* from the chariot-throne of glory, but in the *visions of God* is brought to Jerusalem and shewn in the light of that glory the image of jealousy northward at the gate of the altar. (2 Chron. xxxiii. 7). It is true Manasseh took it away (ver. 15), but *it had been set by him* in the house of God, and the sin was not forgiven (2 Kings xxi. 11-13), though Manasseh himself was. (2 Chron. xxxiii. 13.) Then a hole in the wall discovered the abominations of the house of Israel and what they were doing, every

man in his chambers of imagery. Further, at the entry of the gate of Jehovah's house were women weeping for Tammuz (the Adonis of the Greeks, and served with licentious rites). Then, at the entry of Jehovah's house, between the porch and the altar (the place where the priests, the ministers of Jehovah, were called on to weep, Joel ii. 17) were about twenty-five men—probably the high priest with the chief priest of each of the twenty-four courses—with their *backs* to the temple, instead of praying towards it (2 Chron. vi, 21), and their faces to the east, worshipping the sun. These were the abominations which provoked Jehovah continually, and caused Him to go far off from His sanctuary. Men might sin against men, but sin against Jehovah in His own house, “who shall intreat for him?” (1 Sam. ii. 25.)

The instruments of God's chastisement are summoned to draw near (chap. ix.), they come from the way of the north. As ever, in judgment God remembers mercy, and a man with an inkhorn is commanded to set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sighed and cried for the abominations done in the city. The others were to go after and slay, beginning at the elders who were before the house. (Compare 1 Peter iv. 17.) Ezekiel makes supplication for the remnant of Israel. The man with the inkhorn reports that he had done as com-

manded. Not one of those marked would be touched. In chapter x. the glory of Him who sits upon the cherubim—instead of being the defence to the city—is the place from whence coals of fire are taken to scatter over the city. Compare Psalm xviii. 7-15, where Jehovah rides on a cherub, and hailstones and coals of fire are scattered on His enemies, but here on the city called by His name. Alas, that its inhabitants should be enemies!

The glory of Jehovah mounted up from the cherubim *for a moment* and stood over *the threshold* of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud and the court with the brightness of Jehovah's glory. (See Deut. iv. 24.) "Jehovah thy God is a consuming fire." It lingered for a moment, and then resumed its place over the cherubim, and again for a moment stood at the east gate as if unwilling to depart. Finally it leaves the city, and is last seen by the prophet on the mount of Olives, the place where Jesus afterwards wept over the guilty city (Luke xix. 37-41), the place also from whence He was carried up to heaven for the accomplishment of more glorious purposes. (Luke xxiv. 50.) How perfect was Jesus our Lord in everything—perfect in the grief which wept over Jerusalem, perfect in accomplishing the will of God, perfect in bestowing heavenly blessing on His own. The lingering of the

glory ere it departed is very sweet, it was Jehovah's then dwelling-place upon earth. The blessed God will yet find His eternal rest in dwelling with men (Rev. xxi. 3)—the assembly, as adorned in Christ and for Him, being the tabernacle of His abode in His own new creation—a creation secured from evil by redemption. From the time of Exodus xxv. 8, and onward, the desire of God has been manifested. The desire also that God should have a dwelling-place amongst men has been wrought in the heart of saints. (See David, Psa. cxxxii.) That desire was fulfilled to saints when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and now by the Holy Ghost forming them into a habitation of God by the Spirit. Cannot we then understand the lingering of the glory ere it departed?

Chapter xi. gives the other side of the picture. At the gate looking east were twenty-five men—those who gave evil counsel, denying that judgment was near, and saying, Let us build houses, and under a figure asserting themselves to be the flesh that belonged to Jerusalem. The house of Israel, guilty of blood, thus spoke, but they would fall by the sword in the border of Israel. An important point now comes before us—the distinction between those gone into captivity (“for their good,” according to Jeremiah) and those remaining in the city

(under Zedekiah), who said that the land was given to them in possession. To the former, Jehovah would be a little sanctuary in the countries where they came, and He would regather them and give them the land of Israel, putting a new spirit within them, and taking the stony heart out of their flesh. To the others, God would be a consuming fire. (Chap. x. 2.)

Chapter xxxvi. shews that it is at the time of the end that God brings the remnant back. Meanwhile the chariot-throne of the glory of the God of Israel stands on the mount of Olives. There Ezekiel leaves it, so to speak. There He whom Israel pierced, Jehovah's fellow, will stand when He comes in glory and power. (Zech. xiv. 4.) The present period of Messiah's rejection, and of the times of the Gentiles, forms no part of Ezekiel's prophecy. At the end, he sees the glory re-enter the house *from the East*.

Thus far is the introduction to the book. It gives the secret of the governmental judgment *by Jehovah*—outwardly by Nebuchadnezzar—of the people and city whom He had set in the midst of the nations as His people, and they had falsified Him before them in every way.

Now (chap. xii.) the *word of Jehovah* comes to Ezekiel; it is not a vision shewn to him. The people among whom he dwelt were a

rebellious house, having eyes but they saw not, and ears but they heard not. Although in captivity, yet the prophet had to remove, digging through the wall in their sight, as if going into captivity—a portent on the one hand of the prince (Zedekiah) still reigning in Jerusalem being taken captive to Babylon to die there, but not to see it. Nebuchadnezzar put out his eyes. (Jer. xxxix. 7.) On the other hand, it would be the death-blow to any hope of the return to Jerusalem of those already in captivity. Israel would know *that Jehovah had done it*. They were saying in unbelief, “The days *are prolonged*, and every vision faileth.” (Compare Matt. xxiv. 48.) “Tell them,” said Jehovah, “The days are at hand, and the effect [or accomplishment] of every vision.” However patient God may be, yet if His people will not recognise *Him* in long-suffering mercy, He will most surely bring to pass His own word, involving judgment on rejecters of the word. Jehovah’s words should be deferred no longer.

In chapter xiii., consequently, the prophets of Israel that prophesied out of their own hearts are judged. They daubed up the wall (of Jerusalem) with untempered mortar, and with falsehood grieved the heart of the righteous, and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way,

and thus save his life. Everything is searched by the eye and word of Jehovah. (Compare Heb. iv. 12, 13.) “They shall know that I am Jehovah.” In chapter xiv. *the elders* of Israel come to the prophet, but they are exposed by the word of Jehovah. They had set up their idols in their heart. One that did so, and yet came to a prophet to inquire of Jehovah, would be answered by Jehovah Himself and cut off. It would be manifest that *He* had done it. If *the prophet* that had spoken a thing were deceived, Jehovah had deceived him that He might destroy both the deceiver and the deceived from among His people. It is well to note how the Spirit of prophecy by Ezekiel pronounces *the final and complete issue* of things—the cutting off of the wicked, that the remnant may in truth be Jehovah’s people and He be their God. In verse 12 *the land* is dealt with. It is still Jehovah Himself intervening in judgment. If He sent His four sore judgments into it one after another, none but the righteous—such as Noah, Daniel and Job—would escape, all else would be cut off. Noah passed *through* the flood, which swept away the wicked, into a renewed earth; Daniel through the captivity and the den of lions, and would “stand in his lot at the end of the days”; Job passed through the attacks of Satan and the tribulation consequent thereon,

and came into a double blessing. What if Jehovah sent the four judgments on Jerusalem? We must remember that while Jerusalem was standing, the eyes of those already in captivity would be inclined to look toward it, forgetful of its iniquity. It would be cut off and it would be recognised that Jehovah had done it, a remnant only being left.

In chapter xv. Israel, compared to a vine, which is of no worth save for fruit-bearing, is shewn to be fit only for the fire of judgment, not having borne fruit for Jehovah. (Compare Isa. v., John xv.) In Ezekiel we have not only a prophet but a priest, one of whom it could be said, though he had no ephod or Urim or Thummim, that the secret of the Lord was with him, and he is given (as with John in Patmos in after days), to declare prophetically things as they were under the eye of the Lord Jehovah; and that while men and circumstances might be used of Him, yet it was *He* that was using them.

In chapter xvi. *Jerusalem*, the elect city of Jehovah, is caused to know her abominations—her origin is declared—she came (that is, *the city*, not Israel) of the Amorites and Hittites of Canaan. In the eyes of the Lord Jehovah everything was loathsome about her, but He said to her, Live! and what she became was the handiwork of Jehovah. If it could be said,

“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God,” it was because of the beauty *He* had put upon her. Moreover, He entered into covenant with her and she became *His*. And all that He had given her she had treated as if it were her own, and used it for evil. The children God had given her she had slain. She should be judged as women that break wedlock and as those that shed blood are judged. Her wickedness, *as viewed by the Lord Jehovah*, exceeded that of Samaria and Sodom. All her lovers He would gather against her, to stone her with stones and execute judgments upon her. Yet in the end He would remember His covenant, though *she* had broken it, and establish with her an everlasting covenant (see chap. xxxvii. 26), and her mouth would be entirely closed as to herself.

In chapter xvii. we have a riddle, the actings of the two great powers of the world, Babylon and Egypt, with the kingdom of Judah as represented at Jerusalem. Babylon’s haughty king-making resulted in Zedekiah being a spreading vine of low stature—an abased kingdom under the heel of the Gentile, Zedekiah being confirmed in it by an oath taken in the name of Jehovah. This oath Zedekiah broke by seeking to Egypt. He thus profaned the name of Jehovah by whom Nebuchadnezzar had made him swear. Such conduct should

not prosper and Zedekiah would go captive to Babylon. But it was not in Jehovah's mind and purpose that the kingdom should be abased. Jehovah would take the highest branch of the house of David and set it (Isa. xi. 1), planting it on the mountain of the height of Israel. (Isa. ii. 2; Micah iv. 1, 2.) It is *Jehovah's doing*. He brings down the high tree and exalts the low. (Compare Luke i. 51, 52.)

Chapter xviii. gives the *then* governmental dealings of God. *Judgment was at the door*. No longer would a father's iniquity be visited *in after years* on his son, but "the soul that sinneth, *it shall die*" under *the then present* dealings of God with Israel in judgment. Judgment would deal with every one *according as it found him*; yet Jehovah had no pleasure in the death of him that dieth (compare chap. ix. 4, where judgment begins at the house of God), but that he should turn and live.

Chapter xix. is a lamentation for the princes of Israel. Pharaoh had taken one (Jehoahaz) captive to Egypt; Nebuchadnezzar had taken Jeconiah and was about to take Zedekiah, and thus for the time there would be no sceptre in Israel, all would be in a wilderness condition. The return from Babylon under Zerubbabel did not restore the kingdom to Israel. The King presented Himself to them according to

Zechariah ix. 9, but of this return in order for the presentation of the King and His being refused Ezekiel does not speak. *The passing away of royalty from Israel remains a lamentation.*

In chapter xx. the turning point of Ezekiel's prophecy is reached. Certain elders of Israel come to the prophet to inquire of Jehovah through him. But the Lord looks below the surface and sees, beneath the apparent desire to know His mind, the hardness and indifference of heart to *Himself*, which He had *always* seen in them. Why come to *Him* to inquire? He would make them know the abominations of their fathers. In the day that He chose Israel, and lifted up His hand to them in the land of Egypt, He made Himself known to them, saying, "*I am Jehovah your God*" (Exo. vi. 1-7), bidding them put away the idols of Egypt, but they did not (see Josh. xxiv. 14), yet Jehovah wrought with them for His name's sake, and made them go forth out of Egypt into the wilderness. There He gave them His statutes and ordinances, and *His sabbaths* as a sign between *Him and them*. But again, they walked not in His ordinances, and profaned His sabbaths. Still He wrought for His name's sake. Though the rebels died in the wilderness, yet He spake to their children, saying, "*I am Jehovah your God,*"

but they did as their fathers had done. When He brought them into the land, then they offered *their* (not His) sacrifices upon every high hill—there they presented the provocation of their offerings. Their then present scattering and dispersion among the nations was the result of their insults to Jehovah. Being scattered among the nations, Jehovah read what was in their mind, that they would be *as the nations* to serve wood and stone. Would He, thus treated, be inquired of by them? Jehovah would rule over them with fury and with a mighty hand, and bring them out from the peoples whom they wished to be like, and from the countries wherein they were scattered, and bring them into the wilderness of the peoples—they would find themselves *in a wilderness condition*, for they would find no springs of God their Jehovah among these peoples, but He would use that wilderness condition in order to plead with them as He had done with their fathers in the wilderness of Egypt; there He would purge out the rebels—they should not enter into the *land of Israel*, for they were not the Israel of God.

Thus by means of the judgment which would purge out the rebels (for God looks at the heart) they would know that He was Jehovah. The prophet's word from Jehovah to the men who come to inquire of Him was, "As for you,

O house of Israel . . . Go ye, serve every one his idols henceforth." Such is their present condition (for Ezekiel does not give us the history of the remnant of Judah and Jerusalem returned from Babylon, nor the times of the Gentiles) until the day when *all* the house of Israel shall serve in His holy mountain, in the land which Jehovah gave to their fathers. There they would loathe themselves for their past doings.

Chapter xx. 45-49 in the Hebrew is joined to chapter xxi. Here the judgment of the *nations* begins. Jerusalem and the land of Israel being regarded as *one of them*. Babylon is not named, save as the power which then executed God's judgment. The two great world-powers specially judged are Tyre and Egypt—the one *Creature* glory and perfection of beauty, but both glory and beauty short of what is *divine*. It (Tyre) was a rival to Jerusalem and Zion, where the perfection of divine beauty is spoken of, for God shines out from thence. (Psa. l. 2.) In the other we see a power lifting itself up in the earth because in the providential orderings of God it enjoyed great prosperity from its wonderful river. "My river is my own, and I made it for myself." (Compare Psa. xlv. 4.)

This part of Ezekiel begins with a general prophecy as to the *south*. We must remember that the prophet had seen a whirlwind and

cloud coming from the *north*. (Chap. i. 4.) The fire of God's judgment is kindled there, and it comes against every green and flourishing tree as well as every dry tree ready for burning. The judgment begins with Jerusalem and the holy places of the land of Israel. (Chap. xxi.) Jehovah's sword is drawn out of its sheath. It is wielded by the king of Babylon who used divination (ver. 21) as to which way he should take, whether towards Rabbah or towards Jerusalem. The final judgment comes on Jerusalem because of *the profane, wicked prince*, who had sworn by the name of Jehovah and broken his oath.* This leads to a general overturning until He comes whose right it is. *We thus pass on* to the time of the end, for the overturning lasts till then. Though the divination led to Jerusalem first, yet the sword would be also against the children of Ammon.

Chapter xxii. Jerusalem is judged—*the bloody city*—that was its character. (Compare Matt. xxiii. 35–37.) In chapter xxiii. Samaria and Jerusalem are spoken of under the names of Aholah (her tent) and Aholibah (my tent is in her)—“two lewd women”—they come under judgment because of their adulteries, and for

* The *crown* is removed from Judah. Zechariah vi. 9–15 shews us “The Branch,” and crowns laid up in the temple. The crown would have returned had they received “The Branch.”

the shedding of blood—the two great sins which brought the flood on the world of the ungodly. (Gen. vi. 11.) The judgment of Jerusalem as “a bloody city” is continued in chapter xxiv.—blood shed, and not covered with dust, but openly in the sight of God. The consuming of all its goodly pieces, as well as its scum, is figured in a pot with fire under it. Moreover, the Lord Jehovah would profane His sanctuary, where He had dwelt with Israel. The desolation of Jerusalem is figured in the death of the prophet’s wife, no mourning or sorrow is allowed to him; so the loss to Israel of all that had been their glory would be with such sorrow that they could only moan one to another. I presume this will be found also in the last days.

But if God begins at the place of His throne and sanctuary, the nations around are judged. Ammon is judged for saying Aha! against Jehovah’s sanctuary when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel made desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into captivity. Moab is judged, because they regarded Judah as one of the nations, and not as the people of Jehovah; Edom is judged for its revengeful spirit. God’s vengeance would fall on it by means of Israel. The Philistines also perish on account of their old hatred. Note, that all this part was

uttered on the self-same day that Nebuchadnezzar drew near to Jerusalem.

Three chapters are devoted to the judgment of Tyre. Jerusalem had been a hindrance to Tyre's glory. She is called by Tyre "the gates of the peoples." (Compare for this Psalms xxiv. 7; c. 4; cxviii. 19, 20.) No doubt Solomon's reign anticipated these utterances as to Messiah's reign, and something of the former glory which entered those gates remained until it departed as Ezekiel had seen it. (Chap. xi. 23.) Jerusalem's glory had diverted the peoples from Tyre's commercial glory. Tyre then said, "I shall be replenished now she is laid waste." But Jehovah's word was, "*I am against thee, Tyre!*" The result would be that many nations would come against her, not to traffic with her merchandise, but to utterly destroy her. Nebuchadnezzar would come against her *with much people*, who would *make a spoil of her riches*. The whole of this commercial prosperity would perish—brought down *to the pit*, while Jehovah would set glory in *the land of the living*. (See chap. xxxvii. 3-10.) Chapter xxvii. describes Tyre's glory and wealth; the same spirit of aggrandisement is found in the mystical Babylon at the end. (Rev. xviii.) Chapter xxviii. is addressed to *the prince* of Tyre, the chief or ruler of her magnificence. Secure in his own wisdom and

wealth, he had said, "I am a god," "I sit in the seat of God," but he should be brought down *to the pit*, and die the death of the uncircumcised; that is, without the hopes of the true people of God, which lie in resurrection. Such is the end of the pride of wealth. (Psa. xlix. 6-20.) But there is another principality, called in verse 12 *the king* of Tyre. We cannot doubt that Satan is indicated here. He had been created in perfect beauty, but fell by his pride. God had planted the beautiful Garden of Eden at first, and Satan had been there, and when he had separated man from God, and man was turned out of the paradise God had made for him, Satan sought in the family of Cain to build up the world in alienation from God. Tyre comes before us as his masterpiece of worldly wisdom and beauty. All that the natural heart of man could delight in was raised up in opposition to the glory which God had once placed in Jerusalem. In verse 18 Tyre is seen as identified with this fallen being, and would perish for the multitude of her iniquities and the unrighteousness of her traffic. In verse 20 Zidon is judged, the last mentioned of those round about Jerusalem. When God has gathered Israel from among the peoples, all these nations which despised them, and on whom God had executed judgment would know that Jehovah was Israel's

God, and Israel would recognise Him as such. Alas for man! how the various elements found among the nations, and indeed among men in the course of this world, are the elements which the god of this world uses to blind the eyes of men to God, as He has been pleased to reveal Himself before them. The centre of this revelation in old times was in Jerusalem, and the nations rejoiced in her fall.

Chapter xxix. Egypt is before us; again, three chapters are devoted to the prophetic utterances against it. Egypt was a power great in its resources. Its prosperity largely depended on its rivers, which, under the providential ordering of God, caused its fertility to abound. Of this Pharaoh said, "My river is my own, I have made it for myself." The Lord Jehovah would bring him into a wilderness condition. The same pride which of old said "I know not Jehovah" (Exo. v. 2) would be brought down, and the inhabitants of Egypt know that He was still Jehovah. They had been a staff of reed to the house of Israel, when they leant on it instead of on Jehovah. Egypt should be a desolation for forty years, and then be the basest of kingdoms, and should no more lift itself up among the nations, and no more be the confidence of the house of Israel. In verse 17 the resources of Egypt are given by the Lord Jehovah as payment for the hard

service done by Nebuchadnezzar's army against Tyre. "They wrought for me, saith the Lord Jehovah." It is well for us again to note how the prophet, amidst all the then scenes of God's dealings with the nations, views the Lord Jehovah making Himself known. As has been said, "He moves all the circumstances that He is behind."

In chapter xxx. the whole of the country of Egypt and its dependencies is desolated; it is *the day of Jehovah* on the prosperity of Egypt. In chapters xxxi, xxxii. Pharaoh is first compared to a lofty tree as the Assyrian had been. Both these powers sought to exalt themselves among the trees of Eden; that is, the system of nations which *God had providentially planted* according to Deuteronomy xxxii. 8. The Assyrian had already been brought down, and so should Egypt be; the sword of the king of Babylon should do it, but Ezekiel's prophetic statements do not include the transference of power to Babylon, as constituted by God the head of Gentile dominion. The prophet views the day of Jehovah *as already there*, and then passes on to the time of the end, omitting the intervening period of "the times of the Gentiles." Prosperous and proud, Egypt is brought down to Hades. Asshur, or the Assyrian, was already there, also Elam (Persia) is viewed as going there, and Meshech and Tubal, known

to us as the Russian power—all those who had caused terror in the land of the living. Edom and her kings, the princes of the north, and the Zidonians—all go down to the pit. Such is the end of the glory of this world as it had been providentially arranged by God, with Israel, His people, as the centre. When the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and the saints of this period are withdrawn from the earth, then the “day of the Lord” will resume its course and deal with all that which has supplanted Israel, as well as with apostasy both in Israel and the Gentiles.

Chapter xxxiii. speaks of the *imminence* of judgment by the sword of Nebuchadnezzar, not now of the cutting off of nations, but whoever *individually* would listen to the voice of the watchman should save his soul (or life), for God had no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Each would be dealt with as the judgment found them. (Compare 2 Pet. iii. 14.) Verse 21. One escaped from Jerusalem brings intelligence that the city is smitten—the judgment had fallen. Then verse 24 shews the utter *insensibility* of those who inhabited the waste places in the land after the city was smitten. They were saying that Abraham was one solitary person, yet the land was given to him, and that now the land was given to them, few as they were. (Compare Isa. li. 2, where the

loneliness of Abraham, multiplied by Jehovah, is used *to encourage* the feeble remnant who feared Him and obeyed the voice of His servant.) Jeremiah (chaps. xl.-xliv.) describes the pursuing judgment which left the land in utter desolation.

Chapter xxxiv. is a woe-chapter at the beginning, but ends with blessing. Compare Matthew xxiii. for the woes pronounced by the Lord on those who stood then as the shepherds of Israel. See also Matthew ix. 36, where *His* compassion went out to the multitude as sheep without a shepherd. Then turn to John x. and compare with verse 11 of this chapter, "I will both search for my sheep and tend them." Jehovah would feed them on the mountains of Israel. Further, He would judge between cattle and cattle, between sheep and sheep, between rams and he-goats. The poor in spirit—the godly remnant—are the true sheep of Jehovah's pasture, and David (the Beloved) is raised up to feed them. (Psa. lxxviii. 70-72.) When all was a ruin in Israel, then David, a man after God's heart, was he who brought Jehovah and His ark back into the midst of Israel, and led the praises of Israel to Jehovah, "for his mercy endureth for ever." This is what Christ (the Beloved) will yet do for Israel. He will separate between "his brethren" and call them Ammi (my people),

while the sinners are destroyed from among them. (Psa. civ. 35.) The Lord Jehovah's own sheep are now His people and He their God.

In chapter xxxv. mount Seir (Edom) is judged because of perpetual hatred to *God's Israel*, and for the blood they had shed. Note, as in the other prophetic statements as to Edom, the judgment comes to them *after* the people are delivered and brought back. Edom claimed to possess the Lord Jehovah's inheritance in the two countries (Judah and Israel), "whereas *Jehovah was there.*" Consequently Edom would be a desolation when the whole earth rejoiced. It is the judgment of those who presumed to touch the Lord Jehovah's inheritance. It prepares the way for chapter xxxvi. The mountains of Israel are again addressed. (See chap. vi.) The enemy had said, "The ancient high places are ours in possession"—so Edom had said—but the Lord Jehovah had already in the fire of His jealousy spoken against the remnant of the nations and the whole of Edom who had appointed *to themselves* His land, seeking to make it their prey. The prophet is to utter *God's thoughts* as to the land, for God calls things that are not as though they were, "*My people Israel*" (for He had searched them out) "shall possess thee [the land] for their inheritance."

Israel had profaned Jehovah's name and defiled His land by blood, and surely verse 18 includes the blood of Jesus shed by Israel, as well as all other righteous blood. (Matt. xxiii. 35.) But Jehovah would hallow His great name in the sight of the heathen, and would act according to *that name*, and not for Israel's sakes who had profaned it. (Compare Num. xiv. 17, 18.)

In verse 25 of this chapter Israel's history begins afresh as a morally cleansed and restored people. It is not here the blood of atonement, but the water of the word—its cleansing power is set forth in Psalm cxix. Numbers xix. will be fulfilled in them. Zechariah xiii. 1 refers to the same cleansing, though the fountain could not have been opened to them, if atonement had not been made for them. This is learned by them *after*. (See Zech. xiii. 6, 7.) In Ezekiel the atonement comes in chapter xliii. 18-27. The Lord's word to Nicodemus (John iii. 5, 10) refers to this chapter. There is the cleansing power of the water of the word, and a new spirit within them begotten of God's Spirit. It is a new beginning which has its source in God, which would cause them to walk in God's statutes and keep His judgments, and also to loathe themselves for their iniquities and abominations. Yet for the accomplishment of this the Lord Jehovah would be inquired of by the house of Israel. The mark of the con-

version of Saul of Tarsus was "Behold, he prayeth." At present the veil is on the heart of Israel, but when *it turns to the Lord* the veil shall be taken away.

Chapter xxxvii. takes up that which is expressed in its fulness in John v.—the passing from death to life. In chapter xxxvi. there is the communication of something new and of God; in chapter xxxvii. the old history is seen to be *in the silence of death*—a valley of dry bones—and Israel lives again, as coming up out of their graves and quickened by the breath of Jehovah through His word. (Isa. xxvi. 19.) It is the resurrection of the nation, now lost in the dust of the earth, but then owned of Jehovah, and addressed as "*O my people.*" Ezekiel is still addressed as "son of man," he is outside of the guilty nation, but is now directed to take two sticks—one for Judah and for the children of Israel, *his companions*; and the other for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *all* the house of Israel his companions—and join them as one stick in his hand. The Lord Jehovah would take both from among the nations, and make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and "David my servant"—the true shepherd of Israel—the Lord Jehovah Himself, and yet Jehovah's servant—Jesus—(Psa. lxxx. 1, 17) should be their King. An everlasting covenant of peace

is made with them. Hebrews xiii. 20 refers to this covenant secured by the blood-shedding and resurrection of Jesus. God's sanctuary is in their midst, and His tabernacle *over them* (compare Isa. iv. 5; lx. 1), and the nations should recognise them as *Jehovah's sanctified people*, and no more as one of the other nations. He their God, and they His people.

Chapters xxxviii. and xxxix. detail the coming up of the last enemy of Israel after they have been brought back as from the dead and established in their land as God's sanctified people. It is Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. (Gen. x. 2.) "Many people" are with him, they are those exterior to the sphere of the special dealings of God which we have seen to be described as the trees of Eden. Isaiah xxiii. refers to this power. It comes up to take a spoil and to take a prey from a people gathered out of the nations which have gotten cattle and goods. (Vers. 10-13.) This huge multitude is identified with "he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets for many years." That is, the prophet is in spirit in the time of Israel's restoration—a time not yet come—and looks back to the old devastating power which had come against Israel when they were in the land—the Assyrian power—but now not *sent* against an hypocritical nation,

for Gog comes up to fulfil the lust of his own heart, and ignorant of the thoughts of Jehovah as to His people, *now fully owned as such*. Gog and "the many" with him falls upon the mountains of Israel, and their destruction is the means of the extern* nations knowing Jehovah as the God of Israel. (Psa. lxxxiii. 18.) But this coming up of Gog—doubtless referred to in Psalm cvii. 39—after Israel had been gathered from east and west and north and south, and where they are spoken of as "minished and brought low again," is used to make regathered Israel more fully to understand "the lovingkindness of Jehovah." Their history was not a chapter of accidents, as men speak. The nations also would learn that *it was Jehovah* who had caused Israel to be led into captivity, and *Jehovah* who had gathered them again into their own land, and poured out His Spirit upon them. This is the great burden of Ezekiel, that Jehovah should be known, working all things for the glory of His own name.

Chapters xl.-xlii. give the vision of the city and temple yet to be built. The vision was fourteen years after the city had been smitten. *Two cycles of seven years had passed*, and the prophet is brought in the visions of God to a

* That is, the nations outside of the special sphere of prophecy.

very high mountain in the land of Israel. (Compare Rev. xxi. 10.) A vantage point from whence to survey the thoughts of God. Ezekiel, as Moses on the mount with regard to the tabernacle, is given to see it so that he might declare it to the house of Israel. I cannot explain the building. No doubt it will be fully apprehended in the last day. It needed that Bezaleel should be "filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom and understanding" in order to carry out the pattern given to Moses. (Exo. xxxi. 3.) One remark though is of importance, that *no builder* is seen. The man with the flax-cord and measuring reed measures the building and shews to Ezekiel the details. We may say, it is God's workmanship. We know from Isaiah lx. that the sons of the strangers shall build up Zion's walls, but here everything is looked at *as built*, its courts and chambers and most holy place. There is a separation between that which is holy and that which is common. Such a thing could not be in the heavenly city.

Jehovah returns to dwell among His people in the glory of government. There are priests and people—again, such a thing could not be in the heavenly city, there only Christ is seen reflected in His saints. There is also a prince of the house of David who has a special place. Again, when the priests go out of the holy

place into the outer courts where the people assemble (Psa. c. 4), they leave their holy garments in the sanctuary and put on other garments to approach to the people. There cannot be for a people still in bodies of flesh and blood—though sprinkled and cleansed, and a new spirit within them—the blessed nearness into which we enter by the death and resurrection of Christ. We do not get the thought of that fulness of grace through which a poor malefactor could be with Christ in paradise. The priestly family is still of the sons of Aaron. Of old they stood *before God on another ground* than that of flesh and blood, figured by their being *washed* (not sprinkled) with water; then clothed in garments of glory and beauty—*garments that belonged to the sanctuary*, for the priestly ephod was of the same materials as the veil with gold added, and the veil typified the flesh of Christ (Heb. x. 20); and then blood and oil taken from the altar and put on them. (Exo. xxix. 21.)

The approach of *the people* is still at the altar (Exo. xxix. 43), the place where good and evil is estimated, for evil may shew itself. That which characterises the holiest is God's holy glory, and there evil cannot be, and there *the people* could not approach. In chapter xliii. the glory of Jehovah enters by the east gate—it is the dayspring from on high, but it is the

same *cherubic glory of government* which Ezekiel had seen at the first, and the temple is the place of His throne and of the soles of His feet. The pattern of this holy sanctuary is to be *shewn* to the house of Israel, that they may see themselves and their doings in the light of it. It is also to be *written*, that they may keep it; thus it abides for the generation to come. Compare this cherubic glory of Ezekiel with the seraphic glory of Isaiah vi., where all is judged according to the character of Jehovah Himself, "Holy, holy, holy!"

We have spoken of the altar and its sacrifice. It is *there* that *Israel* will learn that the sacrifice of Christ is the ground of mercy rejoicing over judgment (1 Chron. xxi. 26-xxii, 1), and the basis of all their blessing and worship, and thus *Israel's place of approach* to God in His sanctuary. Thus God's judgment of evil in the cross will always be present to them (for evil may shew itself in the millennial earth, it is not a state of perfection, Isaiah lxxv. 20). It is not as in the heavenly city, where there is no temple, for the presence of God and the Lamb fills every part of the city, nor can evil enter there, it is excluded by His presence. Moreover, the Levites who went astray from Jehovah when Israel went astray are not allowed to enjoy the priestly nearness of that coming day; they keep the charge of the house—a privilege

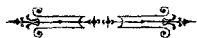
indeed—but *holy government* is maintained. The dying malefactor parted with evil for ever, and in the fulness of grace went to be with Jesus in paradise. The sons of Zadok (the righteous) have a special place, they judge according to Jehovah's laws and statutes.

The land is divided among the tribes in quite a different way from its partition by lot in the days of Eleazar and Joshua. Nor is there, as typically of old, the taking possession of the land on the Canaan side of Jordan, while some remained on the wilderness side. But the land, *as given by God's promise to Abraham*, is divided among them according to prophetic instruction. (See Gen. xv. 18–21.) I have said “typically of old,” because typically the heavenly inheritance is possessed by passing through Jordan, and by the victorious power of Joshua, the captain of salvation; while the earthly part on the other side of Jordan was a dangerous and exposed position, but valued for its earthly resources. In the coming day every enemy will have been put down, and the promise to Abraham will be possessed in peace, but it will be *Zion* that will have the light of heaven, the fulfilment of Jacob's vision; the house of God on earth will be *the gate* of heaven, not heaven itself. The mediatorial glory of Jesus will link heaven and earth together in the blessings of that day. The

portion for the sanctuary and city—for the ~~prince~~—for the priests and Levites—is fixed between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, seven tribes being on the north, and five on the south. This portion is an heave-offering from the land given to Israel. It is, so to speak, received in grace from the people Jehovah has blessed, “thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” Hence there are peace-offerings—the sense of the interest Jehovah has in them, and their interest in Jehovah their God. They keep the feasts of the passover and of tabernacles. Pentecost belongs to this period when the Holy Spirit has come to gather out the heavenly company.

The name of the city—though no doubt it is Jerusalem as we learn from other scriptures, but on a new foundation altogether—is Jehovah Shammah—the Lord, or Jehovah, is there.

The prophecy of Ezekiel begins with the glory of Jehovah coming from the way of the north to judge the city and sanctuary instead of dwelling there; and the book ends with the Lord Jehovah being continually there.



DANIEL (GOD [IS] MY JUDGE).

WE have to notice that in the earlier chapters of this book (i. to vi.) the prophet does not speak in the first person ("I"), and in that which he records there is no prophetic utterance as being the voice of Jehovah to His people. When in chapter ix. he makes supplication, it is "for *thy* city and *thy* people." The Lord answers through Gabriel. "Seventy weeks are determined upon *thy* [Daniel's] people."

But let us consider these six chapters. The first chapter and the first two verses of chapter ii. were written in Hebrew; from thence to chapter vi. in the Chaldean language. It is a description of the course of Gentile rule as committed by God to Nebuchadnezzar. The first chapter introduces us to Daniel himself. He was taken captive with others early in the reign of Jehoiakim (2 Kings xxiv. 1). It was not *the* captivity in the days of Jehoiakim, when Judah was made a vassal kingdom under Zedekiah; but before that, Daniel and others of "the king's seed and princes" had been brought captives to Babylon. We may wonder that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who were righteous men according to the law—a

godly remnant—should have been taken captive rather than the evil doers in their nation ; but in that way Jehovah's holy government was vindicated (2 Kings xx. 18), yet mercy rejoiced against judgment, and these men were sheltered in Babylon from the sieges and desolations of Jerusalem, and also from being in the midst of the iniquities of her people, and further, they were witnesses for the Most High in the midst of the Gentiles.

We may note two things in Daniel—the purpose of heart which refused the delicacies of the heathen court, and his maintenance of the purity in eating according to the direction of the law ; even as the Christian is directed to eat *in the liberty of Christ*, but, “ Whether therefore ye eat, or drink . . . do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor. x. 31.) God answered the faithfulness with which Daniel's purpose of heart was carried out. We have an example in Isaac of the effect produced by his being a “ man given to appetite ” : his perception of the mind of God was blunted and perverted, and he purposed to give Esau—the profane man—the patriarchal blessing, well knowing that in God's sovereignty it was for Jacob. This faithfulness to light already given brought with it from God to Daniel and his companions that wisdom and understanding which fitted them to take the remarkable place accorded

to them in the government of God. The word was verified in them that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."

We might here refer to Paul when a captive in Rome. (Phil. i.) He rejoices in the Lord, in the sense that His overruling hand had placed him there. In the power and grace of Christ he is superior to circumstances. Our introduction to Daniel, placed in a like position, is completed in the last verse of chapter i. In chapter ii. we find Nebuchadnezzar disturbed by a dream. The dream, though utterly gone from him, had troubled him in a marked way, and he sought in vain for its recall and for its interpretation. The powers of evil connected with the idolatry of Babylon could do nothing, and the imperious and self-willed monarch sought to destroy all those who were regarded as the wise men of Babylon. Daniel and his fellows, being reckoned among them, were imperilled by the king's hasty command. The prophet comes before us now as *a man of prayer*. We have seen him before as a man of self-denial. He and his companions desire mercies of the *God of heaven*. We have seen in Ezekiel that the throne of God, established at Jerusalem, had assumed a chariot form, and finally had left the city and gone up from the mount of Olives. Henceforth the title of the "God of heaven" is given to Him. (Ezra i. 2;

vi. 9 ; vii. 12.) This “ God of heaven ” revealed the king’s secret to Daniel in a night vision, and Daniel blessed and praised Him as *the God of his fathers*. Note the sentence, “ He giveth wisdom *to the wise*, and knowledge to them that know understanding.” (Ver. 21 ; compare also Prov. viii. 9.) As also our Lord said : “ Whosoever hath, to him shall be given.” Note also, that when before the king Daniel confesses that the secret was not revealed to him through wisdom of his own, but that the God of heaven would make known to Nebuchadnezzar what should be in the latter days. The imperial power committed to him would have a course, and finally be overturned and destroyed.

The great image seen by the king in his dream is interpreted by Daniel to be a portrait of Gentile dominion from its establishment in Nebuchadnezzar—the head of gold—to its close. Gold, because “ the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory ” had been directly committed to King Nebuchadnezzar by the God of heaven. In the silver and the brass there is deterioration, the rule is not so directly given of God. Three other kingdoms arise, but the dominion does not become *base* until miry clay is seen in the feet and toes of the image. The rule and government given by the *God of heaven* had then become debased by

the admixture of that which was of the earth, the sense of rule being given of God is lost. (John xix. 11.) "The man of the earth" and his confederation have no thought of God before them. It is on this base form of Gentile dominion that the stone cut out without hands falls. The whole image broken to pieces is swept away, and the stone becomes a mountain—Christ's kingdom set up by the God of heaven—and fills the whole earth. The proud Gentile monarch abases himself before Daniel, whose God was the God of gods and Lord of lords. What superiority is given to the captive prophet with whom was the secret of God.

Chapter iii. The revelation that the *gold*, as well as the iron and clay, would be swept away and another kingdom set up had no effect on the king. Regarding himself as the head of gold he enlarges the idea, and makes an entire image of gold, representing doubtless his own imperial dominion. (Compare Rev. xiii. 14, 15.) Not only so, but all the various subordinate authorities under the king are summoned to fall down and worship the image. Gentile dominion becomes idolatrous. In Babel at the outset there was an attempt to maintain the unity of the human race by confederation in building a city and a tower—a centre which would prevent their being scattered. In Babylon Nebuchadnezzar would unite the peoples,

nations and languages in idolatrous worship, he himself being the centre.

It is probable that *the report* to Nebuchadnezzar of the refusal by Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to do homage to the image was made through jealousy by the Chaldeans. These three men foreshadow the godly remnant in the last days who refuse to worship the beast or his image. They do not escape the fiery furnace, but the God whom they trusted shewed Himself strong on their behalf and only their bonds were burnt, while One like the Son of God walked with them in the furnace. These three men were witnesses to the whole assembled company of peoples, nations and languages that the God of these poor Jews was the God who could deliver His people from the rage of Gentile wrath.

But this head and beginning of Gentile rule is not yet brought to own this God of heaven. He had acknowledged Him as the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, and decreed that no one should speak against Him, and these servants of the Most High had the honour of His being called their God. It is in chapter iv. that Gentile dominion is brought to a right mind—the only true and proper mind before God. He learns that “the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing,” this nothingness the king accepts and blesses the

Most High, the King of heaven. The chapter is an address from "Nebuchadnezzar *the king*" to all peoples, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth. It is no longer a summons to own his greatness, or to bow to the image he had set up, with the alternative of being cast into a fiery furnace, but he now sends to them the message, "*peace be multiplied unto you.*" The death and resurrection of Christ places the Christian on a higher elevation than that on which Nebuchadnezzar stood, though the glory of his kingdom returned to him and excellent majesty. He recognises the rule of the heavens, but the saint of this dispensation belongs to those high and heavenly places towards which the king now looked.

Let us look at the details of the king's dream and its fulfilment as told by himself. "I was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace," when another dream made him afraid. Daniel seems to have been overlooked by the king at first, but when all the wise men of Babylon failed to interpret it, Daniel comes before him, but the king only regards him as "master of the magicians" (or scribes) and addresses him by the heathen name he had given to him, "Belteshazzar" (Bel's prince). To him the king relates the dream. He had seen a tree *in the midst of the earth*; it was the very centre of earthly greatness, the height

reaching to heaven, and the sight to the ends of the earth, but he saw also a *watcher and holy one* come down from heaven, who uttered heaven's thoughts as to this tree. It had been watched and surveyed in heaven; the progress of things on earth was fully known there. Doubtless the Spirit of Christ spoke in this holy one. His word was, "Hew down the tree and cut off his branches." The voice of the watcher has changed from "its" to "his." "Let *his* portion be with *the beasts in the grass of the earth*: let *his* heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given *unto him*." The interpretation troubled Daniel—there was no rejoicing over the fall of Gentile power which God had set up—the dream evidently referred to the king himself. "It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness . . . reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth." But the sad and solemn part of the watcher and holy one's sentence—the decree of the Most High—is thus interpreted, "They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field." Is this the end of earthly greatness and Gentile dominion, figured at first by a *head of gold*? "Man *being in honour* abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish." To be brought down to the level of a beast, with a beast's heart, is

morally the end of the "man of the earth," living without the knowledge of God. Still in the ways of God Gentile dominion will be recovered from its low condition and be fully brought into subjection to heaven. "There shall be a root of Jesse to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious"; "All nations shall call him blessed and the whole earth be filled with his glory." This One is not the "man of the earth," but the One who having gone down into the lower parts of the earth has ascended up far above all heavens. The seat of His government will be in the heavenly Jerusalem. "The nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it." The throne of God and the Lamb are in it. Power will no longer be divorced from the sanctuary of God—where His glory dwells. Nebuchadnezzar represents Gentile power recovered to a right mind. It was at the moment that his lips uttered the pride of his heart, "Is not this great Babylon, that *I* have built by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of *my* majesty?" that the sentence fell on him. At the end of seven years—a full period of time—the king thus speaks, "*I lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High.*" (Vers. 34–36.) He

concludes thus: "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven" (Nebuchadnezzar had only been a king upon the earth), "all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

We now follow Gentile dominion, continued in Belshazzar, into the infidel and daring presumption, and apostate condition which will characterise it, just at the moment when its judgment lingers not, but is at the door. The careless insensate world-power is feasting when the judgment overtakes it. In the ways of God it is so ordered that the vengeance should fall when the profane and apostate heart of man is doing despite to grace. Belshazzar *well knew* what had happened, and the recovery granted in grace to Nebuchadnezzar his father, but was not humbled in heart thereat—so Daniel tells him—*he had lifted himself up against the Lord of heaven*, and under the influence of wine had used the vessels of His house to drink it in honour of idols, while the God in whose hand was his breath he had not glorified. Well might the knees of the presumptuous monarch smite together as the mysterious fingers of *a man's* hand wrote on the wall. We may notice that the queen and Daniel were both apart from Belshazzar's banquet, and she could point out Daniel to

him as one who could interpret the writing. The king *had heard* of the neglected prophet, and in his terror summons him. We may mark the calm and holy dignity with which Daniel speaks to the king: "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation." To Nebuchadnezzar Daniel had spoken kindly: "My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee." To Belshazzar he sternly reveals his doom. He first reads the writing, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," then interprets it. Mene (numbered); *God* hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. This is twice repeated. Tekel (weighed); *Thou* art weighed in the balance and found wanting. Peres (another form of the word Upharsin, meaning divided); *Thy kingdom* is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. The kingdom finished in its Babylonian state of unity under one head is divided and passes to the Medes and Persians. The end is told in the simple and weighty words of scripture: "*In that night* was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom." These are the ways of God. History tells us of the diversion of the river Euphrates from its bed, and of the march of Cyrus under the brazen gates and along the bed of the

diverted river, while Belshazzar and his lords were feasting in fancied security; but history does not tell that which Daniel revealed, that the God of heaven was ordering the movements of men in pursuance of His own decrees.

Chapter vi. brings before us, *as under the eye of God*, the last phase of Gentile dominion. The power used by Him to destroy Babylon as *the head of gold* is now reigning there in the person of Darius the Mede. We need not inquire as to the extent of his kingdom: in the ordering of God it necessarily embraced a larger area than that of Nebuchadnezzar, but as represented by the breast and arms of silver portrayed in the image of chapter ii., it was interpreted by Daniel to be "inferior" according to the mind of God. For if Jehovah be the one Jehovah, King over all the earth (Zech. xiv. 9), and all rule and authority be committed to the Son, as Son of man, to Him who is Jehovah, the Ancient of days (chap. vii.): and again (in Psalm cii. 22, when the peoples are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve Jehovah), the One in rejection and suffering once is declared to be "the Same" (ver. 27), the One who appears in glory (vers. 15, 16), it is clear that *one* sovereign rule and authority is according to the divine mind. This was committed to Nebuchadnezzar, who debased it,

instead of magnifying it under God. This the Son of man will do.

In the kingdom of Darius there was delegated authority. This was man's wisdom, but through the working of the envious will of his counsellors it involved the king in unjust judgment. The vanity of the king consented to be set above all that is called God, or worshipped. (2 Thess. ii. 2-4.) The laws of the Medes and Persians set aside righteous judgment, and the prophet of God is persecuted. We see the same unjust judgment in Pilate through the voice of the people, as Darius here through the voice of the presidents and princes. In the one rule of the Son of David not only shall kings fall down before Him, but "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth . . . he shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence." (Psa. lxxii. 12, 14.) The moment Darius acts for himself, Daniel, preserved of God, is lifted from the den of lions, and swift judgment executed on his persecutors, the Gentile power being brought to own *the living God*, who delivers and rescues, and works signs and wonders in heaven and earth. So will be the deliverance of the remnant of Israel in the last days. Though they have been among lions (Psa. lvii. 4), their deliverance will be to the effect of magnifying Him who has delivered them from the pit, "into the midst whereof they

[the persecutors] are fallen themselves." (Ver. 6.) It will be the great witness to the salvation of God upon earth; as the saints, who participate in the full and final salvation wrought in resurrection, will be witnesses of heavenly glory. The history of Daniel as representing the faithful Jewish remnant in captivity to Gentile power, and yet having the testimony of God as to its course and end, closes here.

The manner of the prophetic word changes in chapter vii., and Daniel speaks personally. It is no longer "This Daniel," but "I Daniel." (Ver. 15.) We go back some seventeen years, and Daniel dreams. He is not interpreting Gentile dreams and visions, but needs to have his own dream interpreted to him, in order that he might write "the sum of the matters." His dream portrays *the character* of Gentile rule when surveyed from the point of view of *the ways of God* while His people are in captivity and no longer have His throne among them. Daniel saw the four *winds of heaven* striving on the great sea (of nations). John speaks of the four winds of *the earth*. (Rev. vii. 1.) On the one hand Satan is said to be the prince of the power of the air, but on the other God is He who walks on the wings of the wind, or if it please Him, He gathers the winds in His fists. All things fulfil His will.

Still it is out of the strivings of the sea of nations, but agitated by the powers in heavenly places, that four great beasts arise. The first is evidently the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar with its wings plucked—its careering power gone, and lifted up from the earth and made to stand on its feet (no longer soaring) and a man's heart given to it. (See chap. iv. 34.) The second, the Medo-Persian kingdom—the Persians gaining the ascendancy—its character “devouring much flesh,” the absorption of territory rather than imperial rule characterises it. The third, like a leopard with four wings—the kingdom of Alexander of Greece—sets forth conquering power, the wings denoting the rapidity of his conquests. But the prophet's great attention is arrested by another vision. He saw in the night visions another beast, “dreadful and terrible,” a mystic beast without a name—representing the fourth, Roman or western, empire. Finally his great interest centres in a little horn rising up in the midst of the ten other horns that formed the power of the beast. The characteristic of this horn was that it had the intelligence of a man, and a mouth, not devouring men, but *speaking great things*. It is because of the *great words* that *the horn* spoke (for *its* words were against the Most High) that *the beast* was slain and *its body* destroyed, that is, on account of the

words of this horn, the fourth kingdom comes under the fire of God's judgment. But in a further vision Daniel beheld till the thrones were set, and the Ancient of days* did sit. It is from His throne that the judgment goes forth. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken from them, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. Then in the night visions the prophet saw One like the Son of man (compare Rev. i.) come with the *clouds of heaven*—they are the seat of heavenly rule. He is brought to the Ancient of days, and there was given to Him dominion and glory, and an everlasting kingdom which shall not pass away.

The interpretation of the vision, as always in scripture, adds some important details. The four kingdoms on earth give place to *the saints of the most high places*, who possess the kingdom for ever and ever. Who are these? Not exactly the saints of the assembly who derive their birth and character from the heavenly places where the Lord Jesus is (Eph. ii.; Heb. xii. 23), but all those whose hopes of blessing have at all times been linked with the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, and in this secret place they have known, as

* This term is probably the equivalent in Chaldee for the Eternal I Am. Compare Revelation xx. 4, where the thrones are not only set but occupied.

Abraham, the protection of the Almighty and the sure accomplishment of promise through the Jehovah of Israel. (Psa. xci.) Kingdom glories are in view—these saints will reign in the kingdom. Whilst speaking in general of the saints of the most high places possessing the kingdom, yet verse 25 shews that Jewish saints are in question. The little horn made war with the saints and prevailed against them. Other scriptures teach us that this same personage is in league with the ungodly nation. (Isa. xxviii. 15; Dan. ix. 27.) He changes the Jewish times and laws and puts down Jewish worship for three and a half years, but the judgment sits, his kingdom is destroyed, and the kingdom *under the whole heaven* is given to *the people* of the saints of the most high places, that is, to the godly remnant of Israel. (Psa. cxlviii. 14.) He who gives it—His kingdom is everlasting, and all dominions shall serve Him. Daniel ponders the matter, but kept the secret in his heart.

Chapter viii. This vision, three years after, still takes place during the time of the weakened state of Babylon's power. *In his vision* the prophet is in Shushan, in the province of Elam (Persia) by the river Ulai. In vision he is in the east (as in chapter vii. it was in the west). He saw the Medo-Persian kingdom represented by a ram with two horns—the higher one

being the Persian. The ram pushes westward, northward and southward, and does according to his will and becomes great; but while Daniel was considering the doings of the ram, "Behold, an he-goat came from the west," it touched not the ground, for its objective was the ram. The he-goat symbolised the Grecian kingdom, and the notable horn Alexander the Great. The Persians had given great provocation to the Greeks, and the "fury" and "rage" of the Greeks broke forth under Alexander.

This is history, but under the providential ordering of God it became the occasion for the rise of "a little horn" out of one of the four which came up instead of the great horn which was broken. The time when this little horn would rise is not given. It became exceeding great toward the south and east, and toward "the beautiful" (it may be earth or land as Ezek. xx. 6, 15; chap. xi. 16, 41, or "the temple" J. N. D.), "the ornament of the earth." It is this which is the subject of interest with Him who gave the vision to Daniel, and it becomes so to the prophet. "Zion, the perfection of beauty," is God's centre on the earth, and the actings of the little horn with regard to it are shewn to the prophet. It became great "even to the host of heaven." Here we must call to mind that in the days of this horn the Jews would have

returned from the captivity in Babylon and had been in their own land for some years, and had built again the altar (Ezra iii. 1-3) and the temple also. (Ezra vi. 15.) We have to look at things as God regards them, and rule and authority do not spring from man's will. Nebuchadnezzar had to learn that the heavens rule, and God will make good the rule of heaven upon earth in connection with the Jewish nation. The little horn cast down to the ground those who derived authority from heaven (the stars) and trampled on them. The horn is then seen as a person, "*he magnified himself* even to the prince of the host," that is, Christ looked at as the Head of all rule and authority; and "from him" (that is, from the prince of the host) "the continual sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his [the prince's] sanctuary was cast down." It does not here say by whom. (See chap. ix. 27.) Verse 12 is partly a parenthesis, and then the *little horn* is again before us, "*it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.*" This was its character. The doings of this horn are referred to in chapter xi. 30-35—one who *at that time* will put down Jewish worship, for we must remember that *the horn* is the power, the person who wielded it then was Antiochus Epiphanes. Verses 13, 14 carry us on to *the end*, as also does Gabriel's interpretation—

“*the last end of the indignation.*” This term connects this horn with the Assyrian power, for the “indignation” ceases in its destruction. (Isa. x. 24, 25.) This little horn seizes on the old Assyrian territory, and in the latter times, when transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and *understanding dark sentences*, having the character of prophetic wisdom (Psa. lxxviii. 2), but Satanic, stands up and destroys the mighty and the holy people, that is, the Jews, for that is their character before God. Transgression will have come to the full through receiving Antichrist; this we learn from other passages of scripture. Stephen (in Acts vii.) convicts the nation of breaking the law, killing the prophets, murdering Christ, and resisting the Holy Ghost; finally they will receive one who does according to his own will as their Messiah. But this little horn, the instrument of God’s chastisement against the transgressors (Israel), finally *stands up against the Prince of princes and is broken without hand*. (Compare chap. xi. 45.) The judgment of Sennacherib is a figure of this being broken without hand. Compare Isaiah x. 32, the Assyrian shakes his hand against Jerusalem, but *Jehovah* lops the bough with terror. See also Psalm lxxvi. In Zion “*brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.*” The vision was to be shut up; *it was for many days*.

Chapter ix. carries us to the first year of Darius, after Babylon had been taken. Daniel understood by books that the seventy years of which Jeremiah prophesied were close on their accomplishment. The effect of it on this man of God led to deep abasement "before the Lord *my* God," for all the sins and iniquities that had brought the chastening on Judah, Jerusalem, and all Israel. There was a very full confession—Daniel, though personally righteous, associating himself with the people—supplicating Jehovah *our* God. This marked his uprightness of soul. It was not enough that *the period* of chastening was over, if the chastening did not bring about real turning of heart to God. Daniel thus represents in his spirit the true repentance of the remnant of Israel when they shall turn to Jehovah. Confession becomes the remnant of to-day. Christendom is the result of the departure of the responsible church from its first love, and of its dishonour to the Holy Spirit. Man's ability has been substituted for His power and witness. The upright in heart cannot dissociate themselves from the failure while seeking to be true. The answer brought to Daniel by Gabriel went far beyond the *then* desolations of Jerusalem being removed, and the captives in Babylon returning to their land.

It is beautiful to notice that the command-

ment to Gabriel went forth at the beginning of the prophet's supplication, and that Gabriel should say, "I am come for thy words." The man of prayer and confession is "greatly beloved." He looked at things in the spirit of Christ. Jesus confessed our sins, and bore them on Calvary. Gabriel's communication did not begin until some eighty years after the return of Israel from captivity. It dates from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem. (Neh. ii. 7, 8.) Jerusalem, God's holy mountain, greatly occupied the prophet's heart. (Ver. 16.) Towards Jerusalem he opened his window and prayed (chap. vi. 10), though living in great Babylon, whose glory was already fading.

Seventy weeks (of years, for there were sabbath years as well as days) were determined "upon *thy* people and upon *thy* holy city." Lo-ammi was still written upon them. There is doubtless a connection of thought between the seventy years of captivity (ver. 2) and the seventy weeks of years determined. This period reaches then far and away beyond the return from Babylon's captivity, though that might and did foreshadow a fuller deliverance. In connection with this some short sentences follow pregnant with meaning. "To finish the transgression," for walking contrary to God would involve the people in the rejection of

Christ, and the reception of Antichrist; "to make an end of sins" in one of two ways, either by looking on Him whom they pierced, or by "the sinners being consumed out of the earth, and the wicked being no more" (Psa. civ.); "to make reconciliation for iniquity," that involves Israel's entering into the truth of the day of atonement (Lev. 16), the people being before God in the value of the work of Christ as presented to God in the holiest, and not as standing on the covenant of works. The worship of the redeemed earthly people will be as of those brought into the light of the heavenly sanctuary (purified by Christ having entered in by His own blood), and by the church being there with Him—Satan and his hosts having been cast out. Finally, "To bring in everlasting righteousness." It has already been established in heaven, but Christ *will bring it out* as the great Melchizedek, the King of righteousness. See also Isaiah li. 5, 6; Psalm lxxii. 1-3, "To seal up the vision and prophecy," the day of testimony will be over, and the things testified will have come, and "to anoint the most Holy," an abstract expression, alluding to that which we find in Psalm cxxxiii., the anointing on the head of Aaron flowing down to the skirts, and the dew of heaven caught by the lofty head of Hermon descending on the mountains of Zion.

The seventy weeks are divided into three periods—seven weeks, sixty-two weeks (these two reaching to Messiah), and one week. The period of seven weeks began from the decree of Artaxerxes (Neh. ii. 3-8) to build *the city*. The city and the wall would be built “in strait of times” (see margin), that is, during the seven weeks. As to the sixty-two weeks, the special point is, that after their completion shall Messiah be cut off, “and have nothing.” (Margin.) No crown, nor kingdom, nor people, for Daniel’s people are in question. Then, “a prince that shall come” is spoken of. It is the king, the Antichrist; the true Christ having been cut off. But before he comes *the people* of that prince—the Romans—shall come and destroy the rebuilt city and the sanctuary. It is the destruction foretold by our Lord (Luke xxi. 24) and accomplished by Titus. And “desolations are determined until *the end*” (Isa. x. 22, 23), or, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled—these desolations are going on now. “And *he* [the prince that shall come] shall confirm a covenant with the many [the mass of the ungodly nation] for one week,” that is, the seventieth. (See Isaiah xxviii. 15 for the people’s part in this covenant.) There is no time given as to this last week, save that it is after the cutting off of Messiah, and the appearance on the scene of Israel’s history of

“the prince that shall come,” spoken of by the Lord in John v. 43. In the midst of the week he breaks the covenant (Psa. lv. 20) by causing the sacrifice and oblation to cease. The special worship of Israel at the altar (Exo. xxix. 42, 43) is put down. Revelation xi. 2 shews that the court, where the altar stood, is trodden under foot by the Gentiles for forty-two months, that is, for half a week—the last half of the seventieth—and idolatrous worship is substituted. We may gather that Nebuchadnezzar's image (Dan. iii.) will be re-enacted. (See Rev. xiii. 14, 15.) This image will represent the imperial but Satanic power of the Roman Empire (the beast). In 2 Thessalonians ii. 4 we have the idolatrous character of this “man of sin.” The result of this is that there shall be a desolator—the Assyrian power of the last days—until the consumption, and what is determined shall be poured out on the desolate (Jerusalem trodden down). Compare Isaiah xxviii. 16–19, where the rejected Messiah is the foundation stone for faith, and the refuge of lies (the false messiah's kingdom) is swept away, and the overflowing scourge treads down those in league with him.

On this communication the prophet makes no comment: it is received in silence, in the patience of the Spirit of Christ.

Chapter x. is a very interesting chapter.

The revelation here made to Daniel was about two years after the return of the captives to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. Daniel had not gone with them. I think we may say that in his spirit he was in other scenes. The vision of chapter vii. had taught him of saints who belonged to the most high places; in chapter viii. he is in scenes long after the return from captivity; and in chapter ix. he learns that the city and sanctuary that would be built would be again destroyed with a flood, and the Messiah be cut off and have nothing; and finally of the unclean spirit of idolatry returning, under which the ungodly nation would shelter for protection. Daniel has understanding, and we find him again mourning and fasting for three weeks. He is in vision by the side of Hiddekel (the Tigris) and sees One who is neither Gabriel nor Michael, but evidently the angel of Jehovah's presence, and Daniel addresses Him as "My Lord." Like Isaiah (chap. vi.) or John in Patmos, or the disciples on the mount, or even Paul on the road to Damascus—a denizen of earth finds himself in the light of the glories of another world, and Daniel's comeliness was turned to corruption. Can it be that this glorious Person, so interested in Daniel and Daniel's people, is the One who would as Messiah be cut off and have nothing? Daniel

is strengthened and addressed as a man greatly beloved. What is of such interest is that he is brought into touch with the orderings of the rule of heaven, though in a providential way. At the beginning of Daniel's setting his heart to understand, and to humble himself before God, *his words were heard*, though twenty-one day's intervened, yet the prophet's words brought this glorious visitor. He had been at the court of Persia, whose prince wanted to cross the ways of God; this glorious Being would return there, and as a result the prince of Greece would come and overturn the schemes of Persia. But Daniel is comforted in this, that there is One whose interest is in His people, who knows the end from the beginning, and can restrain or overrule the doings of men.

Chapters x., xi., xii. form one revelation or vision. It is connected with the east (as chapter ix. with the west) and with the doings of Persia and Greece. *Darius the Mede* is the king who reigned in Babylon on the death of Belshazzar. This change of dynasty was confirmed and strengthened by this glorious Person. It mattered little as to men and their doings. God's government, though hidden, is everything to faith. The vision Daniel saw was in the reign of *Cyrus* (a Persian) and there were to be yet three kings of Persia, but

what is important in the ways of God is that two of these kings lent themselves to the enemies of the returned captives in order to hinder the building of the temple as commanded by Cyrus. We find them named in Ezra iv. In verse 6 Ahasuerus comes before us—he was the Cambyses of history, the son of Cyrus. In verse 7 we have Artaxerxes, who caused the work of building the temple to stop, his name was Smerdis—a magician and impostor whose reign was short. The third we have in verse 24, Darius the king of *Persia*, called Hystaspes—who confirmed the decree of Cyrus. The fourth is the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther—Xerxes—who stirred up all his strength against Greece. The mighty king of verse 3 (Dan. xi.) is Alexander the Great of Greece who broke up the Persian dominion. Verse 4 tells us that his kingdom should be broken and divided towards the four winds of heaven, but the subsequent narration is of the doings of two only of the four—the kings of the south and the north, that is, of Egypt and Syria, though these countries are not named; they are spoken of as south and north in reference to the land of God's delight. The history of these opposing powers is pursued until verse 21, their names and doings and intrigues and wars are matters of history, but were all known beforehand by the spirit of

prophecy. The land of beauty or ornament (ver. 16) lay between these two conflicting powers. In verse 21 we come to a "vile person." He gains ascendancy over the Jews by scattering among them prey and spoil and substance, and stands out in our chapter as a prototype of "the king" (ver. 36)—the wilful one of the last days. The name of this vile person was Antiochus Epiphanes. Foiled in his purposes by the ships of Chittim—the power of the west—he has indignation against the holy covenant, and pollutes the sanctuary of strength, overturns Jewish worship, and places the abomination that makes desolate. This was permitted of God, and had the effect of bringing to light among them the apostate Jews who had intelligence with him and did wickedly against the holy covenant,* and on the other hand the people that knew their God and understood (the Maschilim) acted and instructed the many.

The communication at once passes on (it

* The holy covenant I take to be that made with *the Mediator and the people* (Exo. xxxiv. 10, 27) consequent on the revelation of the *longsuffering mercy* connected with the name of Jehovah after the apostasy of the golden calf. Yet Jehovah would do "*a terrible thing with them.*" This points to the great tribulation. This covenant of mercy is constantly referred to in scripture. (See Ps. lxxxix. 1; Ezra ix. 8, 9; Neh. ix. 17, 31, 32; Ps. cxxxvi., &c.)

was the time of the acting of the Maccabees) *to the end* when Israel will again be in their land, brought back by Gentile power and consequently under the heel of the Gentile, but with those in their midst who look to Jehovah and refuse any deliverance but *His* salvation. Of this Zechariah speaks. This pretentious king in the land of Israel owns no God or power other than of man, the solemn thing being that the ungodly nation will be in covenant with him. We learn that the power of this king will be energised by Satan. (2 Thess. ii.) God so orders that he shall be attacked both from south and north—the northern power prevailing against Egypt, and carrying out the determined indignation against Israel. But in the height of his pride, this king of the north, going forth to exterminate, comes to his end with none to help. The judgment of “the king” had already taken place; it is given in Isaiah xxx. 33, where the Assyrian (the king of the north) and “the king” are both judged. The Assyrian who smote with a rod is beaten down, and “the king” has his place in Tophet, kindled by the breath of Jehovah. (Compare 2 Thess. ii. 8.) The doings of this king are described in verses 36–39. (Compare 2 Thess. ii. 4.) The names of the kings of the north and the south mentioned in this chapter are well known in his-

tory, but the glorious Person who speaks to Daniel only regards them as north or south of God's centre in the earth.

In chapter xii. the special relation of Michael, the archangel, with the children of Daniel's people is again brought forward. The people are regarded as being linked with the prophet who interceded for them (so with Moses in Exodus xxxiv.) Michael stands up for them. Satan and his angels had been cast out of the heavenly places. He could no more accuse the heavenly saints before God, and his wrath is then against Israel—figuratively the woman who gave birth to the man-child who is to rule. (Rev. xii.) It is the time of the great tribulation of Matthew xxiv. 21, the "terrible thing" of Exodus xxxiv. 10, the time of Jacob's trouble of Jeremiah xxx. 7, but Israel's travail (ver. 6) will bring them to know the One they crucified, and they will at last say, "To us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isa. ix. 6); and mark, this follows the battle against the Assyrian with burning and fuel of fire. This Son (Jesus) had come and destroyed both "the king" and the Assyrian, and is then recognised as the son given to Israel. "And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book," the remnant foreknown and owned of God, in whom His faithfulness and truth will

be made good, while the apostate nation is judged with their false messiah. But besides this, many that sleep in the dust of the earth, they are as a buried people, unknown, but will awake. (Isa. xxvi. 19.) There will be a voice that will awake those that sleep, even as the midnight cry awoke the sleeping virgins. (Matt. xxv.) Some awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Then "the wise," the people that knew their God, when the wicked were perverted (chap. xi. 32), shall shine as the brightness of the firmament. They are specially linked up with the glory of the day of Christ, and those that turn many to righteousness are linked up with the rule of the heavens over the earth. The vision is sealed till *the time of the end*. Meanwhile men go on their way, and increase in the knowledge of earthly things. Verses 5-7 are an additional witness to the glory of the Man, clothed with linen, above the waters of the river, who could lift up his hand to heaven and swear by Him that liveth for ever (compare Rev. x. 5, 6), that the scattering of the power of the holy people should be accomplished in three and a half years (compare Rev. xii. 14), and all these things be *finished*.

The prophet heard but understood not, and inquires what *the end* would be? He is answered, "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words

are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." Other purposes of God and eternal counsels would come in, such as were mysteries hidden in God. But when the remnant at the end are in the midst of these things, the wise (the Maschilim) of that day will *understand*. The history of Messiah come in grace, but rejected and glorified, will be before them, though dimly seen. The calling out of a people from Jews and Gentiles, and their translation to heaven will have taken place, and the supplement to Daniel's prophecy, the book of Revelation, will be known. The wicked will still do wickedly.

Then from the time of the setting up of the abomination that makes desolate (referred to by the Lord in Matthew xxiv. 15), there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days, one month more than the three and a half years, and full blessing will come in for those that wait in one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days, one and a half month more. Again it is said, "Go thy way, Daniel: thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days." The man greatly beloved will know the power of the Spirit of Christ, fulfilling without doubt Psalm xvii. 15.

HOSEA (HELP, DELIVERANCE).

HOSHA prophesied during the same period as Isaiah, only he has Israel, *as Israel*, more in view than Judah and Jerusalem. The word of Jehovah to him was, "*The land* is entirely given up to whoredom away from Jehovah." (Ver. 2, New Trans.) Hence the prophet's illegitimate children by an abandoned woman were children of sign. The first three chapters give the subject. They are Jehovah's word to Hosea himself. In chapter i. these three children with figurative names portray the dealings of God with Israel, become to Him as children of adultery. Jezreel (the seed of God), but the name of a valley where Jehu executed judgment on the idolatrous house of Ahab, would be the place also where God would break the bow of Israel. Moreover, God would avenge the blood which Jehu shed, for while executing the judgment of God on the house of Ahab, and on the worshippers of Baal, Jehu served the golden calves at Dan and Bethel which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had set up, and which caused Israel to sin. (2 Kings x. 29.) Jehu would continue the device of Jeroboam in order to prevent Israel returning to God in His temple at Jerusalem.

The second child, a daughter, "Lo-ruhamah" (not mercied) was a witness that God would no more have mercy upon Israel—they would not return to Him. But Judah was still mercied, and would be saved by the Lord their God—the One that Israel had forsaken. Hezekiah's confidence in Jehovah saved Judah from the Assyrian, while Israel was carried captive.

The third son born after Lo-ruhamah was weaned, Lo-ammi, "not my people," seems to embrace both Israel and Judah. Yet God would fulfil the promise made to Abraham (Gen. xxii. 17), and Israel would be restored; but while Lo-ammi was written on the nation, those to whom it had been said "Ye are not my people," that is, the Gentiles (Isa. lxiii. 19), should be called the sons (not "people") of the living God. (Rom. ix. 26.) Moreover, the children of Israel and Judah should be gathered together, no longer apart, and appoint them one head (Christ), and go up out of the land to the place of God's name (Deut. xii. 5, 6) (that which Jeroboam set up altars to prevent, 1 Kings xii. 27–29), and Jezreel (the seed of God) should be great.

In chapter ii. the word of God is still addressed to the prophet, "Say to *your brethren*, Ammi" (my people), *not* to the nation. The Spirit of Christ thus directs the prophet, as in

later days Christ Himself spoke. (Luke viii. 21.) "To your sisters, Ruhamah" (mercied). Those who hear God's word and obey it are brethren and sisters to Hosea, and they are the true Israel before God. "Plead with *your mother*, plead," that is, with the ungodly nation who had gone astray from Jehovah. "She is not my wife, neither am I her husband." As in Revelation ii. 23, Jezebel is the *mother of children* who would be killed with death; so here Jehovah says, "I will not have mercy on her [Israel's] children; they are the children of whoredoms." Her shame was that she had been in covenant with Jehovah, and had gone from Him after her lovers.

Therefore Jehovah would hedge up her way with thorns, and make a wall that she should not find paths to stray. In Isaiah v. 5 Jehovah takes away the hedge and breaks down the wall that He had made to keep strangers out, but here the hedge is made to compel her to say, "I will go and return to my first husband." All that Jehovah had given her He takes away, and thus brings her into a wilderness condition (ver. 3), and yet He was alluring her thither, that there He might speak to her heart. What a blessed way of grace! Her vineyards spring from thence, and Achor, where evil was judged, becomes the door of hope. She shall sing *there* as in the days of her youth. (Exo. xv.) The

wilderness, when viewed rightly, as in the days of the coming up out of Egypt, is the place where a helpless people find themselves with God. What more do they need? We have thus the wilderness history repeated and enlarged—the forty years of wandering ere they reached Canaan is extended from Nebuchadnezzar's day to the time of the end, when the true Israel will find themselves in the same wilderness condition, but cared for there. (Rev. xii. 14–16.) It is there that she will learn to call Jehovah “my husband.” Blessed grace! He betroths her to Himself in righteousness, justice and lovingkindness. Then follows a chorus of praise, as in Psalm xcvi. 11, 12, the heavens (then filled with the risen saints) Jehovah will hear first, and earth's praises rise to heaven, and the earth hears the field with its luxuriant produce, and Israel's children are owned as Jezreel (the seed of God). (Compare Isa. lxxv. 23.) She is *sown by God* in the land, and *the brethren*, the Israel of God, are now Jehovah's people, and He their God.

Chapter iii. concludes Jehovah's word to *Hosea* as to Israel. He is again directed to love a woman beloved of her friend (or companion), yet an adulteress. Such was the love of Jehovah for the children of Israel. She is to abide for the prophet for many days—an indefinite time—and not be another man's.

It figuratively sets forth the present condition of Israel—they belong to Jehovah, evil as they have been towards Him, and yet are without prince or sacrifice, without any visible thing on which to lean; without an ephod, direct communications from Jehovah: or teraphim (household gods or idols, Gen. xxxi. 19). *At the end of days* the children of Israel will learn that Jehovah has been for them, and they will seek Him and David (the beloved), their king—surely Christ—and will fear Jehovah and His goodness. Such are the wonderful ways of the God of Israel. (Compare Rev. iii. for the unchanging love of Christ to the assembly. “As many as I love.” Ver. 19.)

These three chapters form the preface, and carry us from the time of writing Lo-ammi on Israel, through the hidden ways of God at the present time, to the end of days, when they will be again owned by Jehovah—that is, the remnant, His brethren—as His Israel.

Chapter iv. *Israel* is now called on to hear the word of Jehovah. Such is the prophetic office—the ministration of the word of God when the established order of things has failed, be it the priest (1 Sam. ii. 27), or the king. (1 Kings xi. 29–39.) (See also for this prophetic ministration of the word. 1 Sam. iii. 20, 21.) It searches the people, telling them *what God saw* among them. (Hosea iv. 1–3.) There

was no reprovcr for one was as bad as another, people and priest alike. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge" (Mal. ii. 7), but "My people" (for Lo-ammi was looked at as in abeyance) "are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Ver. 6.) They had rejected knowledge, hence God would reject the nation, it should be no priest to Him; for God had said that if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant that they should be a kingdom of priests. (Exo. xix. 6.) This was made good in the remnant who believed in Christ, as Peter says, "Ye are a royal priesthood, a holy nation." (1 Pet. ii. 9.) And in a yet future day the remnant of Israel will be owned as the nation, and "named the Priests of Jehovah." (Isa. lxi. 6.) They had utterly failed in Eli's day, now He rejects them. That also which should have been their glory, as promised to both Abraham and Jacob, that they should be multiplied or increased, only increased their sins and so became a shame to them. They had departed from God, and thus every sin was committed. Ephraim was joined to idols, and God's word was "Let him alone." (Compare Matt. xv. 14.)

Hosea's charge is continued in chapter v. *to the priests*, but the people and the house of the king (of Israel) are called on to hear. I presume these priests were those made by Jero-

boam, who led Israel into apostasy and revolt from Jehovah. Their doings would not allow them to return to their God; there cannot be return when the heart is set upon evil. They might go with their flocks and herds (possibly for sacrifices), but they would not thus find Him. *He had withdrawn Himself from them*—nothing can be more sad and solemn. (Compare Matt. xvi. 4: “He left them and departed.”) Though *Israel* had taken the lead in apostasy, ever ready, as they were, to depart from God’s centre (see 2 Sam. xx. 1, 2), Ephraim *willingly* walked after the commandment, that is, of Jeroboam to worship the calves, and not to go up to Jerusalem. Yet Judah was like those that remove the landmark, that is, he disregarded the inheritance given by Jehovah. (Deut. xix. 14.) Thus Ephraim and Judah would both have the judgment of Jehovah, nor could the Assyrian, to whom they sent, help them. Jehovah hides Himself from them till they acknowledge their trespass. Affliction would drive them to seek Him early.

This leads *Hosea*, as having the Spirit of Christ, to say, “Come, and let us return unto Jehovah,” but the desire to return is not yet truly wrought in either Ephraim or Judah. It was on the third day that Christ was raised up (chap. vi. 1, 2), after having known the awful

distance of the forsaking of God. He came forth into the light of resurrection, and anticipatively could by His Spirit in the prophet speak of the goings forth of Jehovah "prepared as the morning"; and as the rain—the *latter rain* unto the earth. The assembly has known the early rain, and the morning dawn is hers, but Israel, still under the discipline of God, waits; their goodness then was only like the dew of the morning and vanished away. Verse 6 is twice quoted by the Lord in Matthew's gospel: (1) chapter ix. 13, where He bids the Pharisees learn the truth as to Jehovah, brought out, as it was, in Him before their eyes; (2) in chapter xii. 7, where, if they had known this precious character of loving-kindness (or mercy) in God, they would have understood that in Jesus God was great in mercy towards need, and above His own legal enactments, which they only kept in the letter.

In chapter vii. 1 the desire of God to heal Israel is frustrated by the iniquity found in Ephraim and Samaria. They mixed themselves with the peoples, seeking to Egypt and Assyria. Woe to them, for they wandered from Jehovah. They howled upon their beds because of God's chastenings, but did not cry to Jehovah *with their hearts*. They return, but not to the Most High. Jehovah would spread His net over them and bring them

down, they could not be as other people (compare Amos iii. 2) without the governmental chastenings of God, and seeking help in Egypt would only bring them into derision.

In chapter viii. the prophet exhorts them to blow the trumpet. It refers in principle to Numbers x. 9—though the silver trumpets might be no more in existence. (Compare Joel ii. 1.) Some power was coming as an eagle against Jehovah's house, because they had transgressed the covenant and rebelled against the law. The trumpet *made known to God*, so to speak, the cry of the people in distress. Hence the prophet says, "Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee." But two things are charged on them—setting up kings that were not of God; first Saul, afterwards Jero-boam (chap. xiii. 10, 11); and secondly, making idols, the calf of Samaria being one. In this they had sown the wind and would reap the whirlwind. Neither their kings nor their calf could help them. They would be among the Gentiles as a vessel of no pleasure. They had gone to Assyria and were straitened in consequence. They should return to Egypt whence God had brought them out, and whither there was to be no return. (Deut. xvii. 16; xxviii. 68.) Yet God their Maker was forgotten in their doings both by Israel and Judah, the fire of His judgment would devour their works.

Chapter ix. seems to refer to the days of harvest—a generally joyous time among all nations, but specially so with Israel. It was the time of keeping the feast of tabernacles to Jehovah, when they rejoiced in the bounty which Jehovah's land yielded to them. (Ver. 5.) But Israel could not rejoice as other nations. They had gone from God, loving a harlot's hire on every cornfloor. They should not dwell in Jehovah's land. Ephraim, to whom belonged the firstborn's portion, should return to Egypt and eat unclean things in Assyria. They had corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah. (Judges xix.) Ephraim (meaning "fruitful," Gen. xli. 52) would be smitten and bereaved. Israel were as first-ripe grapes to God in the wilderness (compare Jer. ii. 3), but they separated themselves to the shame of Baal-peor. (Num. xxv.) In Gilgal—the place where Israel renewed their strength in the days of Joshua—wickedness was found. (Judges ii.) God would drive them out of His house and make them wanderers among the nations.

Chapter x. Israel is an unpruned (or empty) vine, bringing forth fruit for himself, not for Jehovah; and according to the abundance of his fruit so he built altars, and according to the goodness of his land they made goodly images (or statues). Jehovah would break down their altars and destroy their statues

they would have no king, because they did not fear Him. The days of Gibeah are again referred to. Mark how God goes back to the beginning of evil (ver. 9), though perhaps forgotten by Israel. In Gilgal God hated them for the wickedness of their doings. (Chap. ix. 15.) Yet in chapter xi. God goes back to the early days of Israel, "I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Matthew ii. 15 shews how this early call of Israel was taken up and begun afresh by Jesus. Israel was found in Egypt through providential dealings of God with a family, who, though heirs of the promises, had never in faith embraced them. Jesus was carried into Egypt according to the will of God, that Israel's history might be afresh begun *in perfect blessed obedience*. Afterwards in the same obedience He went down to Jordan, and then into the wilderness, reversing the order of Israel's going. It was Jehovah who taught Ephraim to walk, but they knew not that He healed them. He drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love. Jehovah was everything to them, but they always hankered after Egypt. God would not allow them to return there, but the Assyrian should be his king. Mark the relentings of Jehovah's love to a people bent on backsliding, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? I will not execute the fierceness

of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man." The secret of this love and its relentings is found in Christ. There are two remarkable types of Christ in connection with Israel in Joseph and Moses—both found in Egypt and both having Gentile wives—Joseph is *exalted* in Egypt and has two sons, one, Manasseh (forgetting), for said he, "God has made me *to forget my toil and my father's house*," and the other Ephraim (fruitful). But Moses is not, when come to years, exalted. He forsakes Egypt and suffers affliction with the people of God (Israel). He names his son Gershom (a stranger), he is not at home among the Gentiles, but keeps sheep. His second son is Eliezer (God a help, Exo. xviii. 3, 4). "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the hand of Pharaoh." So it is with Christ—rejected by Israel, He is exalted among the Gentiles in one view (Rom. xv. 9–12), but in His links with Israel He is a stranger among the Gentiles as Gentiles—though the heavenly bride is taken out from them—and there is entire deliverance from Gentile power when energised by Satan, for Christ is King in Jeshurun, and Israel under their once rejected but glorified King will be the head and not the tail.

Now begins the prophet's word from Jehovah

as to Israel's return. They shall walk after Jehovah (as Israel in the wilderness of old) and come out of Egypt and Assyria—out from captivity and oppression—and dwell in their own houses. (Psa. cxviii. 19, *et seq.*)

The last verse of chapter xi. belongs to chapter xii. Ephraim and Israel compassed Jehovah with lies and deceit, but Judah, for Hezekiah was reigning, was yet ruling with God and faithful in holy things. In this twelfth chapter Jehovah goes back to the *beginning* with both Judah and Israel. Deceit came out in Jacob. He supplanted his brother at his birth, hence his name "Jacob," a supplanter; and afterwards deceit came out in his dealings; but there was another thing intimated, that in the election of God "the elder should serve the younger," that is, that the younger should have the pre-eminence. In God's ways with Jacob He deals with him according to his ways, but allows him to prevail at Peniel, and so to become Israel, a prince with God. His strength lay in prayer. At Bethel (Gen. xxxv. 9-15) God revealed His name of "God Almighty," as He had before to Abraham. This He would not do at Peniel. Hence it says, "He found him at Bethel," and then adds, "and there he spake *with us*"—the Jehovah of Hosts of Israel at the bush was the God of Abraham, Isaac *and Jacob*. This

was His memorial *to all generations*. Therefore it is added, "Turn thou to *thy* God wait on thy God continually." Blessed invitation! Did not the supplanter Jacob prevail by prayer?

Look at Jacob's ways, "a merchant, balances of deceit in his hand," always deceiving Laban and planning for himself, and yet saying to Laban, "What is my trespass, and what is my sin?" (Gen. xxxi. 36.) So also said Ephraim: "In all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin." God would yet make them to dwell in tents, a condition in which He alone could be their protection. Then note the difference in God's ways—Jacob serving for a wife, and for a wife keeping sheep, and a bride given in grace to Isaac, the heavenly stranger. Again, the bringing up out of Egypt is not looked at as accomplished by the victorious power of Jehovah, but by the word of God through Moses as a prophet, one who could act according to the faithfulness of that word, and thus act on the conscience of the people, bringing God into their circumstances. Thus also were they kept. Hence the word of prophecy was ever the resource for the faithful, but to Ephraim the reproach of Egypt would return upon him.

Chapter xiii. There was a time when Ephraim had the first place in Israel, but he

transgressed in Baal and the sentence of death lay upon him. "And now they sin *more and more*, making altars to all kinds of idols. (Judges x. 6.) As the morning cloud and the early dew they *should fade away*. (Compare chap. vi. 4.) Yet Jehovah, the I AM, had been their God from the land of Egypt; they had known no God but Him (all else were idols) and no Saviour besides Him. He had been their God in a land of drought, but the moment, as sheep in a fat pasture, they were full, they exalted themselves and forgot God. Such is the history of man! Israel destroyed himself by being against God, in whom was their help. When they asked for a king (1 Sam. viii.) they rejected Jehovah as their king, and He "gave them a king in his anger and took him away in his wrath." It was the same with Jeroboam afterwards. Ephraim's sin was bound up in store, it would eventuate in days of travail and death, and they would have to be ransomed *from* death and the grave, not here *out of* death as in 1 Corinthians xv. Still, it will need the power of resurrection life in Christ to accomplish the bringing back of Israel from the place of death and judgment, as Jonah from the whale's belly. (Compare Psa. cxvi. 3, 8; Jonah ii.; Isa. xxix. 4.) Israel, as represented in Ephraim, really cast off God and the house of David (in which was

the promise of Christ) in Jereboam's day. Their death as a nation was through the Assyrian, and as a nation they remain in death. Hosea's prophecy was just previous to their captivity and scattering among the nations by the Assyrian.

Chapter xiv. The spirit of prophecy indicates the opening *by grace* of a way for Israel's return, not to their land, but first to Jehovah. It is the "to-day" of Psalm xcv. "Take with you words, and turn to Jehovah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips." Hebrews xiii. 15 interprets this as "the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." Man's help, or the strength of a horse, are no more regarded (Psa. cxlvii. 10, 11), nor idols the work of men's hands, but Jehovah their God in whom the fatherless find mercy. (Compare Isa. lxiii. 16.) Where among the gods of the heathen was such a thought found? Where the dawnings of love which such a word produces in the heart of a sinner? How quick and gracious the answer "I will heal their backsliding"—that must be first—"I will love them *freely*." Who but He who is sovereign in love could do that? Righteous anger is turned away. Romans iii. 25 declares how this could be. Moreover, Jehovah will be as the dew to Israel; his roots spread first

under the gracious dew of heaven (compare Psa. cxxxiii. 3), then his branches, so that others return to dwell under the shadow that is over Israel. Verse 8 is a dialogue: from Jehovah fruit is found. (Compare John xv. 4, 5.) The prophecy is summed up with the distinction between the just, the righteous remnant, those who are the instructed in "the ways of Jehovah," those taught of God—and the transgressors, they fall therein. Romans xi. 32, &c., celebrates these ways and judgments, unsearchable as they are, by which Israel, and indeed any poor sinner, is turned round to God, and thus the eternal counsels of His love are satisfied.



JOEL (JEHOVAH [IS] GOD).

THE prophecy of Joel opens with that which men would call a great national calamity—greater than the old men or their fathers had known—the devastation by hordes of insects of all the food of the land. It is this which gives occasion to the prophecy, and is an illustration of 2 Peter i. 20. Joel at once leaves the army of destruction to the crops, and passes on to the desolation yet to be caused by a warlike nation without number, and to the day of the Lord. But the prophet looks at this invasion of the land, not only as “cutting off the food” from the inhabitants of the land, but also “joy and gladness *from the house of our God*. (Ver. 16.) A fast is called for, and a solemn assembly proclaimed, on account of the meat-offering and drink-offering being withholden from God’s house.

It was a special ordinance for Israel, when come into the land *given to them by God*, that this joy and gladness (the meat and drink-offerings) should accompany their worship at God’s altar. (Num. xv.) All this had ceased. Their privilege should have been to be a *happy people*. That was God’s thought for them in

His land. All there had now become desolation and famine. It came as a destruction from *the Almighty*, but it is to make way for the blessing bound up with that name. See its first revelation to Abraham in Genesis xvii. The day of the Lord clears the ground for the blessing to be made good. Meanwhile the saint can dwell under the shadow of that name (Psa. xci.), though all be mournful around.

Chapter ii. begins with a prophetic call to make use of another privilege, that of *calling upon God* in the hour of need. "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sound an alarm in my holy mountain." It is a reference to Numbers x. The silver trumpets were made, not only for the calling of the assembly, but in case of war they were to be used to sound an alarm, and they would be remembered before Jehovah their God. Not only the people heard, but *God* heard the trumpet sound. But this great northern host was really Jehovah's army sent against His people. Yet, if they would turn to Him with *all their heart*, and not in a mere outward manner, they would find Him to be the same as He said to Moses. (Exo. xxxiv. 6, 7.) For "who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God?" Hence there is again the call to blow the trumpet, not for an alarm, but to

call a solemn assembly—to gather the congregation from the oldest to the youngest, for all were concerned. It was to be a day of *weeping* and supplication. As in Psalm xlii. 3, tears were their meat, while it was continually said, “Where is their God?” So it will be in the day of the Lord spoken of by Joel. Jehovah would be jealous for His land and people, and their reproach among the nations should be taken away as in Psalm cxv. 1, 2.

In verse 23 there are those—“the children of Zion”—who really turned to Jehovah. They are those spoken of in Psalm lxxxvii. 5, 6. There also is God’s foundation. (Isa. xxviii. 16.) Christ is the Stone, the Rock of salvation for Zion’s children. The Redeemer comes to Zion, and to *them that turn from transgression in Jacob*. (Isa. lix. 20.) We anticipate this salvation as in Hebrews xii. 22; 1 Peter ii. 6; Romans x. 11. Both Peter and Paul open the door for the Gentiles by the word “*whosoever*.” The blessing is connected with Zion, the mount of grace. (Psa. cxxxiii.) Christians have received the early rain of Pentecost—the anointing which links them with the fulness of grace in Christ, while He is in heaven, before He returns to the earthly Zion. When this takes place Israel will get the latter rain.

Besides quoting “that which was spoken” (not fulfilled) in Joel ii. 28, Peter adds (Acts ii.

33), "Being by the right hand of God *exalted*, and *having received of the Father* the promise of the Holy Ghost, he [Christ] hath shed forth this." It is this latter (the promise of the Father) which specially characterises *our* anointing. The assembly is thus in its anointing associated with its Head. See Leviticus viii. 30, where Aaron *and his sons* are *in the same anointing*. The saints at Pentecost participated in the acts of power mentioned in Joel as consequent on the *pouring out of the Spirit*. They were the manifest witness of Christ's exaltation, and they have not continued, because their continuation was dependent on the faithfulness of the witness. But the *abiding* character of the Spirit as the promise of the Father is assured to the saints, because of their association with their Head. So we read in Ephesians i. 13, "*In whom* also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with *that holy Spirit of promise*." It is certain that verses 30 and 31 of Joel ii. *are not fulfilled*, but Peter continues the quotation to bring in "*Whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." The salvation in that day was assured in the *exalted* Man, but Joel goes on to His return to Zion, for there, in the day of the Lord, shall be deliverance for the remnant called of Jehovah. The great army of God's judgment is then driven away, and what had

been a wilderness is glad and rejoices, for "Jehovah doeth great things."

Chapter iii. enlarges upon the great and terrible day of the Lord. (Chap. ii. 31.) Jehovah will turn again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, and will gather *all the nations*, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat (Jehovah judges), and enter into judgment with them *there*, on account of having scattered His people and parted His land. Zechariah xiv. 4 shews that Jehovah's feet (and Jesus is Jehovah) shall in that day stand upon the mount of Olives, which stood on the east of this valley and would be greatly enlarged by the mount cleaving asunder—"a very great valley." The object of the assembled Gentile powers is to defile Jerusalem and Zion, but they knew not *the thoughts of Jehovah*. (Micah iv. 11-13.) He has gathered them "as sheaves to the floor" to thresh them. Psalm lxxxiii. shews this *last* confederacy of Gentile power. The object in that psalm is shewn to be to cut off God's people from being a nation, that the name of Israel be no more in remembrance. They know nothing of that first secret meeting of God with Jacob at Bethel—a stone for his pillow—when God said, "the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, *and to thy seed*"; and again, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have

spoken to thee of." (Gen. xxviii. 13-15.) It was the Gentile power in league with the ungodly nation that cast Christ out of the earth; and now this last lifting up of Gentile power is to destroy the witness *for God*, and the place of His throne in the earth, in order that man self-exalted may possess it under Satan.

Verses 2-8 shew how the Gentiles had treated God's people. Jehovah summons them to their last effort, and He sits to judge them in the valley of decision. Heaven and earth are shaken and moved at the voice of Jehovah who roars out of Zion, for He is there; but He will be the shelter of His people, and the refuge of the *children of Israel*. Then the mountains and hills flow with wine and milk, the rivers are full, and a fountain goes out from the house of Jehovah to water the plain of Shittim. (Gen. xiv. 8, 10.) Certain countries are desolate on account of *violence against God's people*. Israel's iniquity is purged, and Jehovah dwells in Zion—the mount of sovereign grace.

AMOS (A BEARER).

THE occasion of this prophecy was an earthquake (foreseen by the prophet) in the days of Uzziah. Zechariah xiv. 5 connects the shaking of the earth, when the feet of Jehovah (Jesus) shall stand on the mount of Olives, with this earthquake. It is spoken of by the prophet as a voice uttered by Jehovah from Jerusalem. He speaks as the God of knowledge by whom actions are weighed. Doubtless each of the nations here warned would be affected by the earthquake, and the prophet convicts each in their actions—sins against Jehovah and sins against their neighbour. In chapter ii. both Judah and Israel, who were in the midst of these nations, and should have been the light of God to them, are convicted also. Judah because they despised the law of Jehovah and did not keep His statutes, and Israel for sins towards one another. The Amorite had before been destroyed so that Israel might be planted, and in their midst Jehovah had raised up prophets to warn and teach them, and Nazarites separated to Jehovah. The prophets were not listened to and the Nazarites were defiled, but there should be no escape when

Jehovah shook the earth. As in all prophecy, the earthquake then present foreshadowed "that day"—the day of the Lord.

Chapter iii. The "whole family" brought out of Egypt are called on to hear the word of Jehovah. We do well to heed three special points in this chapter: (1) that those whom God brings into special relations with Himself (ver. 2) are those with whom He specially deals in punishment for their iniquities. It may be by depriving them of the privilege, as He wrote Lo-ammi on Israel, or as in Romans xi. where the Gentiles, grafted into the olive tree of blessing, will be cut off, if they abide not in the goodness of God by faith. (2) That the faithful have to go through the sorrow of God's dealing with the iniquity of His professed people, but for them it is holy chastening. (3) The goodness of God to those whom He has taken into relation with Himself, in giving them *prophets who were in His secret* and could interpret His ways, and shew to the people that Jehovah their God was behind all the uproar of enemies sent against them. The chapter concludes with the punishment of the special sin of *Israel* in the calves at Bethel—a judgment executed by Josiah (2 Kings xxiii. 15-20), but which was the prelude of a yet more terrible visitation for idolatry in the day of the Lord.

Chapter iv. It is well to notice in chapters i. and ii. the constant recurrence of "Thus saith Jehovah"; then in chapters iii.-v., "Hear this word." In chapter iv. those on the mountain of Samaria are addressed as "kine of Bashan"—violent people (Psa. xxii. 12), oppressing the poor, whom the Lord Jehovah would take away—utterly cast out. Bethel (God's house) and Gilgal (a rolling), two places of God's special dealing with His people (see Gen. xxviii. 16, 22; Josh. v. 9), were spots where they transgressed and multiplied transgression. For this reason God smote them again and again—so Amos interprets to them what they might esteem mere happenings—but with the same result, "Ye have not returned *unto me*, saith Jehovah." (Vers. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11.) On account of this they must prepare to meet *God Himself* in judgment. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," so Paul says to the same people in a later day. (Heb. x. 31.) Egypt was smitten nine times by *the rod of Moses*, and Pharaoh hardened his heart. The last time, Jehovah said, "*I will pass through the land of Egypt to-night*," and Moses must himself shelter under the blood-sprinkled door. In the Book of Revelation also seals are opened, and trumpets herald judgments, and vials of wrath are poured out, but at last men will have to

meet *the Lord Himself* coming out of heaven with His holy myriads. Thus will it be with Israel, who in spite of all chastening have not returned to Jehovah. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Jehovah, the God of hosts, is His name.

The "word" in chapter v. is a lamentation for the fall of Israel, with no one to lift her up. The end of the chapter brings in the day of the Lord, when Israel will have to meet their God, but while it lingers the exhortation still is, "Seek *ye me* and live." Bethel and Gilgal, former places of blessing, are again referred to—they are now places of nought and iniquity. It is useless to seek to them, they must seek *Jehovah*. Secondly, they are exhorted to "seek good, and not evil, that ye may live." The day of the Lord could only be darkness and not light to those who went on in evil. Their outward approach to God He despised, when in secret they had worshipped idols from the days of the wilderness. It was a long history of idolatry brought to light by the Spirit, which would end in Babylon. There had been wonderful moments of Jehovah's acting in their midst. They carried His testimony and dwelling-place with them through the wilderness, but beneath there was ever the evil heart of unbelief, which departs from the living God. Such is man!

Chapter vi. pronounces *woe* to those who are at ease in Zion, and who trust in the mountain of Samaria, taking the place of the chief of nations, indulging in luxuries and putting far from them the evil day, but they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. This doubtless is an allusion to Genesis xlii. 21. Terrible is the word of Jehovah to such: "I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces." They had turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock, and rejoiced in a thing of nought—that is, in idols. (Compare 1 Cor. viii. 4, "We know that an idol is *nothing*.") They trusted in their own strength, but an enemy should sweep through the land from north to south and afflict them.

In chapter vii. the prophet is shewn some of the forebodings of judgment—the prosperity of the land destroyed by locusts, and then the direct intervention of Jehovah by fire. (Compare Exo. ix. 23, 24.) This causes the prophet to take the place of intercession, and Jehovah's word in answer is, "This shall not be." But Amos is next shewn a plumb-line set in the midst of "my people Israel." It discovered all their unrighteousness, and Jehovah's word was, "I will not pass by them any more." In Egypt the nine plagues passed by them, and the tenth passed over them, Israel being secured by blood, and the Egyptians smitten. Now

the land should be utterly desolated. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, where was Jeroboam's calf, warns the prophet to flee into Judah, treating his words as the words of the prophet himself. Amos answers that as to himself he was only an herdman, but that Jehovah took him as he followed the flock, and said, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel." Amaziah would be cast out of the land, and Israel go into captivity out of the land where Isaac dwelt. Why Isaac? Isaac was Abraham's son and heir and *always dwelt* in the land—not so Jacob.

In chapter viii. Jehovah further shews the prophet a basket of summer fruit—"the harvest was past, the summer ended" (Jer. viii. 20)—and again Jehovah declares that the end was come on His people and that He would not pass them by any more. The songs of the temple should be howlings, and silence reign. They oppressed the poor and their sun should go down at noon. In their extremity they would seek for a word from Jehovah, but should not find it. The word rejected is hidden from them. How often has this been proved in the history of souls. False confidence in idols fails them, and that generation falls never to rise again.

Chapter ix. We come to the complete and final separation of the wicked from the rem-

nant—the true corn: not one grain of the latter should fall to the earth, when Jehovah sifted them among the nations. No matter where they seek to hide (Psa. cxxxix.) there Jehovah's hand would find them, they would sink down in the surging waters of judgment, which would be as the Nile overflowing the land. "*All the sinners* of my people shall fall by the sword." (Compare Psa. civ. 35.) There are two ways in which God finally makes the separation between the evil and the good. In the case of the church, the rapture separates the good from the evil—the wheat is gathered into the barn, and the tares left in the field for judgment. With Israel, it is as above—the sinners are consumed out of the earth, the righteous remnant being hidden and preserved, while the consuming judgment passes over: as Noah was hidden and preserved in the ark while judgment overflowed the earth.

Then God will build again the tabernacle of David which had fallen (Psa. lxxxix. 44), and raise up its ruins, and there will be a remnant of the nations upon whom Jehovah's name will be called. The tabernacle of David will be raised up by the power of life manifested in the resurrection of Jesus. All is secured in Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. James quotes this passage (Acts xv. 16) to shew that God's dealings with the Gen-

ties in mercy was in agreement with (though not in fulfilment of) the words of the prophets, who spoke of Gentiles on whom Jehovah's name should be called. The concluding verses place the Israel of God again in their land in the abundance of millennial blessings.



OBADIAH (SERVANT OF THE LORD).

IN this prophecy we have the judgment of Edom (or Esau). He was Jacob's *brother*. In the pride of his heart he had throughout the age neither bowed to the purpose of God expressed before the birth of the children of Isaac—that the elder should serve the younger—nor to the consequence of his own profanity in selling his birthright. Esau might have been blessed under Jacob with God's blessing, had he feared God; but separated in every way from his brother, his blessing, if it could be so called, depended on his sword. (Gen. xxvii. 40.)

Obadiah dwells on the fact that Edom is the *leader* in the confederacy of the nations against Israel—really against God. See Psalm lxxxiii. 5-8, where Edom heads the confederate nations, the purpose there is to destroy the name of Israel from the earth. However much Israel had failed, and were chastened on account of it, yet they were Jehovah's witnesses even in their chastisement. (Isa. xlv. 8.) Verse 7 shews us that the very nations who were confederate with Edom against Israel, the "men of Edom's peace," prevailed against him.

Verses 10-14 describe the actings of Edom

against *his brother*. It is the story of Cain and Abel again. The object of Edom was to possess his brother Jacob's *God-given* inheritance. (Ezek. xxxv. 10.) With other "foreigners" they joined in casting lots upon Jerusalem. Edom proved its unalterable hatred to *God's* people, as well to his own brother, and would be entirely destroyed. Israel will possess their own possession, but the kingdom is *Jehovah's*.

JONAH (A DOVE).

THE Book of Jonah is rather a history than a prophecy, but our Lord speaks of "*Jonas the prophet*," and also of his being "a sign" both to the wicked generation of Israel (Luke xi. 29, 30), and also to the wicked Gentile power represented in Nineveh. Jonah's history consequently has a prophetic bearing, and he is an example of the way in which God *illustrates* His ways in the history of an individual servant.

In Isaiah we have considered a man filled with the thoughts of Jehovah, and of His glory and salvation. In Jeremiah one bowed under the guilt and sorrows of God's people. Ezekiel is full of holy indignation at the profanation of the name and sanctuary of Jehovah. In Daniel one who in the midst of Gentile power and idolatry and pride walked in the secret of Jehovah. Jonah represents to us Israel, unfaithful in her witness to the Gentiles of Jehovah's holy character and of coming judgment on wickedness and idolatry, his unfaithfulness dragging the Gentiles (the mariners) into trouble and danger. We have an illustration of this in Samson, an unfaith-

ful Nazarite, involving himself and the Philistines in a common ruin. So it will be at the end, and even in this church period it will be the failure of the assembly as a witness for Christ in heaven, and the indifference to Him as seen in Laodicea, that opens the way for the judgment of the world.

But in Jonah we find, not the world, but Jonah himself as the object of the holy and yet merciful dealings of God in government. He is overtaken as he flies from the presence of the Lord. The Gentiles are involved, but God has compassion on them. Jonah is cast into the sea, and it ceases from its raging, but he is secured by the marvellous ordering of Jehovah. A living fish's belly becomes the grave of Jonah for three days and nights, and thus in Old Testament history we have the witness of death and judgment, but of resurrection and salvation, a remnant preserved, though in the very depths of the sea of nations, and brought up by resurrection power. In Matthew xii. 39, 40, the sign of Jonas is given to those whose unbelief wanted such an one as their evil hearts would accredit. The sign given them is a prophetic announcement of that which would be accomplished in the Son of man. It was the sign of the *complete disappearance* of the evil generation from the earth. But would they accept this judgment

in the Person of Jesus? A living Messiah could not be salvation for those under the sentence of death and judgment. He is salvation as having been into it and come up out of it. In Matthew xvi. 4 the sign is again given to them as being utterly insensible to the signs of the times—the gathering clouds of judgment consequent on the rejection of Christ—and the Lord does not make mention of Himself as being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth; *He left them and departed*, with nothing but the sign of Jonas as *their own* judgment. It is awful indeed to meet death and judgment without Christ. What does not the believer possess in Him!

Chapter ii. We may here notice, that the *distress* in which Jonah found himself, and the *depths* into which he was cast, brought fully into light the God from whose presence he had fled. He had confessed to the mariners that he feared Jehovah, and now in his *distress* (ver. 2) faith turned in prayer to Jehovah, *his God*. Psalm cxx. portrays the remnant of Israel as having cried to God in their *distress*—they sojourned in Meshech, far away from Zion. In verse 3 Jonah prayed as one cast into *the depth*. Psalm cxxx. shews the same remnant crying to Jehovah out of *the depths*. Jonah speaks here as one who had been there, and had been delivered. “Thou hast brought me

up from the pit, Jehovah *my God*." He had turned, when in the belly of hell (or Hades) to God's holy temple, and his prayer came in to Jehovah, and salvation is known to be of Him. (Psa. iii. 8.) Let us turn from the type to the antitype—the going down of Jesus into the depths of judgment (Psa. lxxix. 1, 2) and His deliverance from thence, after the judgment was borne, by the glory of the Father. Through the sorrows and death of Christ being anticipated (Rom. iii. 25), salvation could come to Jonah—Jehovah being righteous in saving him. It is very comforting to trace the movement of the Spirit of God in the midst of human woe and judgment, producing prayer and desires which have found a perfect answer in Jesus, the Son of God's love, and *our* precious Saviour. We *begin* with the gospel of a complete salvation brought to us as sinners. *Israel* reaches it through distress and deep waters, into which the holy government of a forsaken Jehovah permits them to fall, in vindication of His righteous ways with them.

Chapter iii. Jonah is again sent to Nineveh to preach the preaching which Jehovah bade him preach. The Lord tells us (Luke xi.) that Jonas was a *sign* to the Ninevites. The man who preached—"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown"—had been down in the depths of judgment, and had come from the

belly of Hades to deliver his message. The Ninevites from the king downward were impressed with the reality of the preaching. The blessed Lord—the greater than Jonah—thus spoke, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor,” and pointed out how Gentiles got the blessing when Israel would not hear. Constantly rejected and refused, yet He set His face as a flint to the end. Then came the moment when he went down into the depths, and was saved out of them, and now the blessed gospel is announced from heaven by One who has in grace borne for us the judgment of God. Never until Jesus went there could it be said that “wrath had been revealed from heaven,” nor could the fulness of God’s salvation be preached and known, till it was set forth in Him who was raised from the dead, and received up in glory. Jonah was to the Ninevites a witness of judgment and salvation; but how slow, as Israel after, to consent to Gentiles having mercy shewn to them—the mercy he had tasted. Such is the narrow heart of man. What a contrast is the heart of the precious Saviour! In Jonah we find one who, having the word of Jehovah, was not wholly in accord with that word. He knew that Jehovah had proclaimed Himself in Exodus xxxiv. 6 as “gracious and merciful

... and repented of evil." Had not Israel proved it again and again? Mark how graciously Jehovah answers to the petulance of the prophet, and by means of a gourd, which *came up in a night and perished in a night*—a contrast to the lovingkindness of Jehovah which endureth for ever—Jonah's mouth is stopped, and Jehovah—blessed be His name—has the last word. "Should not I spare Nineveh, wherein are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons . . . and also much cattle?" Thus the Gentiles share *the mercy* extended to Israel.

MICAH (WHO IS LIKE JAH).*

THE prophecy of Micah covers the same period as that of Isaiah, but "the word of Jehovah" through Micah is for Samaria as well as for Jerusalem. Verses 2-4 form a preface. It is a summons to all peoples, and to the earth and all that is therein. The prophetic word comes from the Lord Jehovah *in His own sanctuary*. He looks at things from thence, and His coming forth from thence, and its terrible effects is announced. The complete fulfilment of this is found in Revelation xix. 11, but the prelude of this visitation by means of the Assyrian was *at hand* on account of the sin of Israel. When God's people cease to be His witnesses through their transgression, what is to stay the hand of the Lord from dealing with the state of things on the whole earth? The failure of the church as a professed light for Christ in the world opens the door for judgment to flow forth from heaven.

The judgment begins with Samaria, but in verses 8-16 it reaches to the gate of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. The prophet names various places—playing upon the meaning of

* See chapter vii. 18.

their names as he utters his lamentation for the judgment that reached them. (Compare Isa. x. 28-32.)

Woe is denounced in chapter ii. against those that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds—they practise it because it is *in the power of their hands*. Therefore Jehovah devised an evil against such a family. “Prophesy not,” they said. Then the prophet asks: “Is the spirit of Jehovah straitened?” Could there be an emergency for which the prophetic Spirit could not give directions? Did not Jehovah’s words do good to those walking uprightly? Was it His doing that things were in the state they were? Then comes the admonition, “Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest.” And yet Canaan, where they dwelt, *was* the promised rest. Joshua had brought them into it. Had not Jehovah in Solomon’s day brought about a rest of glory? Had not Jehovah been invited to take His rest in the temple? Now it was *polluted*, and destruction followed in consequence. Yet Jehovah would surely assemble the remnant of Israel, putting them into a fold (Bozrah), and making them as a flock in the midst of a pasture. The breaker would go before them, breaking down every hindrance. Their king would go before them, and Jehovah at the head of them.

In chapter iii. the princes or rulers of Israel

are summoned to hear. Ought *they* not to know judgment? They are sent by the Lord “for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.” (1 Pet. ii. 14.) But these rulers hated the good, and loved the evil and oppressed the people. The prophets also, who should have declared the testimony of Jehovah, divined for money, and while crying “Peace” (that is, to guilty Israel) were at war with those who did not give to them. All should be *night* to them with no answer from God—a terrible state of things. Micah, with holy fervour, does not say “peace,” but filled with power by Jehovah’s Spirit declares to Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. Their princes judged for reward—priests taught for hire—and prophets divined for money, and yet in their awful blindness they said, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? No evil shall come upon us. It was this very fact that Jehovah’s presence was in Israel—the prophetic Spirit in Micah, Isaiah and others shewed that—that Zion should be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem become heaps. The evil they did was done *as in His presence*—a smoke in His nostrils.

In chapter iv. the Spirit in Micah uses the words of Isaiah ii. 2, 4, passing from the then desolations of Zion to the last days, when the mountain of Jehovah’s house shall be exalted

above all other principalities and powers. It will be as a city set on a hill which cannot be hid (Matt. v. 14), and the light of God will go forth from her, and the nations come to her shining. Isaiah exhorts Israel, in view of this future setting up of Zion, as a present thing to walk in the light of Jehovah. Micah at once passes on to the blessing of those days. There should be no more upheaval of the nations in war for self-aggrandizement, but every man content to sit under his vine and fig tree, none making them afraid. Israel will then walk in the name of Jehovah for ever (compare Psa. cxi. and cxii.), where the character of Jehovah (Psa. cxi.) is seen in the righteous man of Psalm cxii. The Christian has to walk as Christ walked. The halting and afflicted *remnant* becomes the nation; Jehovah reigns over them and His dominion is established in Zion. The kingdom belongs to Zion. But we may ask, Where is the King? Why does the daughter of Zion cry aloud like a woman in travail? Hosea has told us that "the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince." (Chap. iii. 4.) The daughter of Zion goes from the city to the field—the world—even to Babylon. In reality the captivity of Babylon abides (see Neh. ix. 36, 37; and John xix. 15, "We have no king but Cæsar"); *there* shalt thou be delivered—

there Jehovah shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies. Revelation xviii. 4 is no doubt an address to "*my people*" to come out of Babylon at the close. The prophecy in Micah passes on to this close, when it will be the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. (Jer. xxx. 6, 7.) Many nations are gathered against Zion (compare Psa. lxxxiii. 6-8; Zech. xiv. 2, &c.), but they know not the thoughts of Jehovah. He has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor—there they would be broken to pieces, and their substance consecrated to Him to whom all belongs, "the Lord of the whole earth."

In chapter v. there is a prophetic summons to the daughter of troops to gather together in troops; it was without doubt the Assyrian power which threatened Jerusalem in Micah's day—"he hath laid siege against us"—the prophetic Spirit passes on to the last days, for we know that the Assyrian did not then lay siege against Jerusalem. (See Isa. xxxvii. 33.) Instead of Jerusalem being smitten, Israel smote their Judge with a rod upon the cheek—a figurative expression of Israel's rejection of their Messiah. Verse 2 must be read as a parenthesis brought in so that the One who is to be ruler in Israel may be identified. He comes forth from Bethlehem Ephratah, but it is One whose goings forth have been from of

old, from everlasting. Verse 3 resumes. Israel, who smote their Judge on the cheek (John xviii. 22), is given up by Jehovah until Zion's travail (chap. iv. 10) brings Him again into the scene of His former rejection, and of Zion's tribulation. Zion will then say, "*Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.*" (Isa. ix. 6.) Then *His brethren* (Psa. xxii. 22) who, during the time that Israel has been given up, have been added to the church (Acts ii. 47), will return unto the children of Israel. The Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from eternity, will then own the remnant, whose hope is in God's foundation in Zion, as His brethren, and will be among them in the majesty and strength of Jehovah. Instead of its being said, "There is none abiding" (1 Chron. xxix. 15), "they shall abide," and "He shall be great unto the ends of the earth." The Assyrian will come into their land—it is a general statement without specifically pointing out the details of his coming there, for the object of the Spirit is to shew that this *One* will then be Israel's peace, the Assyrian will find the Ruler in Israel *there*. (Compare Psa. lxxvi.) Israel is delivered, the Assyrian land is wasted, and peace assured. Two glories attach to this saved remnant of Jacob. The gracious beneficence of heaven is poured out on the peoples through them. Psalm lxxii. speaks

in the same strain of Christ Himself, and now His Jewish brethren share in ministering His blessing on the earth. But, secondly, this remnant are as a lion in royalty and conquering power among the Gentiles. All that the flesh has sought to put confidence in—horses and chariots, cities and fortresses, witchcraft and soothsayers, graven images and idols—are cut off, and the heathen know such judgment as has never before been known. It is He who has come with the armies of heaven who executes the judgment.

In chapter vi. all that *God has made stable* upon earth—mountains, hills, and the earth's unchanging foundations are called on to hear Jehovah's controversy with His people. His pleading is touching. "O my people, what have I done to thee? and wherein have I wearied thee?" Jehovah appeals to them as a people that He had at the first brought out of servitude to the prince of the world in Egypt by Moses, Aaron and Miriam—the king, the priest, and the prophetess; and at the close of the journey, when the royal power of the world was linked with the false prophet and the power of Satan, He had vindicated them Himself in righteousness.


The prophet then speaks in the name of Israel as to how this Jehovah should be approached. With a multitude of sacrifices? or

with the giving up of a son for the sin of the soul? Would Jehovah delight in that? What He required was to do justly, to love mercy or loving-kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God. All this was found in Christ—the righteous One, the mercy One (Psa. lxxxix. 19), and the lowly One. Jehovah then speaks of what He had found in Israel, so different from that which Israel had found in Him, and calls on them to hear the rod and who had appointed it. Bowing under the hand of God is the way of blessing. But in chapter vii. the godly man is said to have perished out of the land, and there was none upright among men. There was no cluster, only a remnant, like gleaning grapes in the midst of almost universal wickedness. Such was the state of things that no one could be trusted—the most intimate relationships might prove treacherous. Our Lord quotes verse 6 for the troubles of the last days, as well as those which accompanied the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. (Matt. x. 21; Luke xii. 53; xxi. 16.) The only One in whom confidence could be placed was Jehovah Himself. To Him the prophet looks, and waits for the God of his salvation. (Ver. 7.) Then in verse 8 the prophet speaks in the name of the godly remnant, for *they* were God's Israel. However dark the days, this confidence in Jehovah would say, "Rejoice not

against me, O mine enemy [the Assyrian]: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, Jehovah shall be a light unto me." (Compare Isa. l. 10.) "I will bear the *indignation* of Jehovah, because I have sinned against him." The Assyrian is the staff of Jehovah's indignation. (Isa. x. 5.) The remnant bow under it, until Jehovah pleads their cause—this is the sure mark of repentance and godly exercise. Hence the prophetic Spirit passes on to the solitary ones, the real sheep of Jehovah's pasture whom Jehovah would feed. In verse 14 Christ is prophetically addressed. He is Jehovah, the Shepherd of Israel, and yet through Him Jehovah would do marvellous things (Psa. xcvi. 1), according to the days of their coming up out of Egypt. The Spirit of Christ in Moses had led them for forty years. (Isa. lxiii. 10, 14.) These dealings of Jehovah would astound the nations, and bow them down to own the *God of Israel*. (Compare Num. xiv. 14.)

The prophecy concludes with an outburst of wonder at the glorious and gracious character of Jehovah—the same at the end as was made known to Moses on the mount. (Exo. xxxiv. 6, 7.) "*He delighteth in mercy.*" No false religion, old or new, ever had the thought of such a God. Then the marvellous wisdom with which He can be faithful to the promises

made to the fathers in spite of the guilt of the nation comes before us. (Psa. xcvi. 3.) Jehovah makes His word and promise good in a remnant who have Messiah as their Saviour and Shepherd.



NAHUM. (COMFORTED.)

THIS prophet, like Jonah, is engaged with Nineveh. The mercy extended to that city in Jonah's day (some fifty years previously) had been forgotten, and the day of judgment unmingled with mercy is announced. Vengeance belongs to God as well as mercy, and the prophet announces "the beginning of revenges upon the enemy." (Deut. xxxii. 42.) Jehovah had been slow to anger, and His patience was a mark of His great power, but He will not acquit the wicked. (Exo. xxxiv. 7.) Nahum first dwells on this *character* of Jehovah, then upon *His way*. It is in the whirlwind and the storm. "Who can stand before his *indignation*?" A word constantly used for the chastening of Israel by the Assyrian. But if none can stand when that is aroused, yet He knows them that trust Him, and to such His goodness makes Him become a stronghold in the day of trouble. Verse 8, "an overrunning flood"—a term often used of the Assyrian coming against Israel, but now it makes a full end of Nineveh. It would result in Israel being no more afflicted, for the Assyrian's yoke should be broken and Israel's bonds be burst asunder. Nineveh perishes. We learn from Isaiah xiv. 25 that, though the destruction of *Nineveh* was by means of Babylon, yet that the full accomplishment of the overthrow of the

Assyrian power is after Babylon is destroyed. He had lifted up his voice and blasphemed the Holy One of Israel. (Isa. xxxvii. 23.) The destruction of this last enemy leaves the way open for preaching peace upon earth and for Judah to keep their solemn feasts.

In chapter ii. there is a vivid description in figurative language of Nineveh. Of what avail was all her glory and power if Jehovah of Hosts had said, "I am against thee . . . I will burn her chariots into smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions." Well may chapter iii. begin "Woe to the bloody city!" It was the *then stronghold* of the Assyrian power, and perishes, and that for ever. *Nineveh is found no more*, but a representative of the old *Assyrian power* will be found in the last days, though Nahum is more occupied with the bloody city of Nineveh than with the Assyrian power. After mercy had been extended to it in the days of Jonah, it had gone back to its wallowing in the mire. Again Jehovah says, "I am against thee . . . and I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile." The "burden of Nineveh" closes with "There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the report of thee shall clap their hands over thee," for in Nineveh there had been *continual* wickedness. So perishes the city of the mighty hunter. (Gen. x. 11.)

HABAKKUK. (EMBRACE.)

THE prophecy opens abruptly. We have no account of the prophet's lineage, nor of any specific time when he prophesied. We may gather from chapter i. 6 that it must have been about the same time as Jeremiah. But it is the moral state of things which formed "*the burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.*" He is oppressed by what *he saw*. It caused him to cry out to Jehovah, "How long?" Violence and spoiling were before him—iniquity, strife and contention also. The result was that the law was powerless and there was no justice, the wicked had the upper hand and judgment was perverted. It was so in after years when Christ was condemned; yet Israel ought to have been among the nations, as the witness of the righteous rule of Jehovah. It will be so in the coming day. (See Isa. lxii. 2.)

The first four verses form the preface, it is what Habakkuk *saw*. Verse 5 introduces the prophecy: "Behold ye *among the nations*" (that is where Israel was placed), "and wonder marvellously," for Jehovah would work a work, which men would not believe, though it was

declared to them. Here it was raising up the Chaldeans against Israel. Paul uses this verse to the unbelieving Jews in Acts xiii.—they would, as despisers, behold and wonder and perish, not then by the Chaldeans, but by another Gentile power, while the Gentiles themselves listened to the word of the gospel of salvation. The terrible character of the Chaldeans is then before the prophet. They come up for violence. In verse 10 the prophecy evidently changes from the Chaldeans to their king; “*He scoffeth at kings*” (New Trans.) and makes a god of *his power*. This draws forth from the prophet the exclamation, “Art *thou* not from everlasting, Jehovah my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. Jehovah, thou hast ordained him for judgment; and, O mighty God [or Rock], thou hast established them for correction.” The fact of the eternity of Jehovah leads the prophet to say, “We shall not die”; that is, I presume, as a nation. (Compare Psa. xc.) He then pleads the holy character of Jehovah, “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on mischief.” How then could it be that Jehovah was silent, when the wicked Chaldeans devoured those who were more righteous than they. The Chaldeans thought no more of men than as if they were fishes or creeping things to be caught in his net: and having caught them,

worshipped his net. Such is the prophet's complaint to Jehovah on account of what *he saw*.

Chapter ii. 1 should stand by itself. Having made his complaint, Habakkuk *watches* for Jehovah's answer, it comes in verse 2. *The vision was to be written*, and engraved on tablets, not merely for the prophet's comfort, but that whoever read it might run. This is explained in the next verse—the vision was for an appointed time, but it *hasteth to the end*. The runner would hasten to the end of the Lord. The watching and the hastening to Jehovah's end go together. Only faith can thus act. It might tarry, but wait for it, it would surely come, and not be behindhand. Jehovah is never before His time in dealing with evil, nor behind the appointed time. None but He knows it. The end of His ways will be, that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. The tarrying of Jehovah in His dealings with evil may cause the unrighteous to be puffed up, but the just (or righteous one) shall live by his faith. Hebrews x. 36-38 encourages the soul in patience—there is the will of God for us in this time of tarrying *and patience*, but *He* who is the great subject of the vision will surely come and not tarry, and meanwhile the just lives by faith. Hebrews

xi. opens to us the line of faith; it is borne witness to by God, yet they received not the promise, and then the secret of God's patient ways came out, these saints of old could not be perfected in resurrection until the church-saints were ready to take by resurrection their predestined place in and with Christ in glory.

Verse 5. God allows evil to develop itself, while using wicked men for the chastening of His people. His patience seems to bring out all the attributes of His character, and to accomplish His purposes. Hence, while the verse speaks abstractly—so that the character and judgment of “the king”—the “man of sin” of the last days, may be read in the passage—it refers primarily to the Chaldean. He is a proud man that keepeth not at home and cannot be satisfied, and gathereth all nations to himself as did Nebuchadnezzar. These very nations and peoples pronounce his woe! and they would plunder him who had plundered them. Woe also to him that sets his nest on high! cutting off many peoples in order that evil may not touch him. Woe also to him that builds a town with blood, and a city with unrighteousness! Again, woe to him that sinned as Ham had done (Gen. ix. 22), reducing man, made in the image of God, to the level of a beast! And, lastly, woe to the

idolater that bows down to an image without breath! But Jehovah, the living God, is in His holy temple, His way is in the sanctuary, and for the moment all the earth is to keep silence before Him. Faith then would keep silence as to all His ways, but it leads to *prayer*. The vision hastened *to the end*, but the sense of Jehovah being in His holy temple leads him to say, "Jehovah, revive thy work, *in the midst of the years* make known; in wrath *remember mercy*." He then surveys and recalls God's actings of old, when He rose up and went forth for the salvation of His people. "*His ways are everlasting*." The thought of the invader coming up against the people, and the utter desolation caused thereby, made him tremble. For mark, it is not the *captivity* in Babylon which is before the mind of the Spirit, although the Chaldean is the invader. Nothing could more vividly portray the scene of desolation—"the day of trouble"—the foreshadowing of the great tribulation, than verse 17. Yet Jehovah is what He is, the everlasting I AM, and the prophet rejoices *in Him*, and joys in the God of his salvation. This is the prerogative of faith, though it may seem high ground to take, but Jehovah Adonai was His strength for walking where the foot of man after the flesh could not tread—the high places on which faith walks.

It will be noted that Habakkuk is not addressing the people on God's behalf, but the prophet is passed through exercises as to God's ways both with His people and their oppressors, and thus becomes a pattern of the great central truth for the godly that "the just live by faith."



ZEPHANIAH (THE LORD PROTECTS).

ZEPHANIAH prophesied in the reign of Josiah. He appears to be a descendant of Hezekiah, and probably uttered "the word of Jehovah" before the finding of the book of the law by Hilkiah (2 Kings xxii.), and Josiah's action consequent thereon (2 Kings xxiii.); for verse 5 of that chapter (where idolatrous priests are "the Chemarim") seems to be the *then* fulfilling of Zephaniah i. 4, though doubtless it was by Nebuchadnezzar that the land was emptied by Jehovah. (Ver. 3.) As in Habakkuk ii. 20, so in verse 7 silence is to be kept *at the presence* of the Lord Jehovah. He is not regarded here as in His holy temple, for His day was at hand. We have seen in Ezekiel and elsewhere that the sweeping away of apostate Israel from Jehovah's land, and the judgment of all the nations around (to whom they ought to have been Jehovah's witnesses), is looked at as the day of the Lord. It then dealt with the system of nations providentially ordered by God (Deut. xxxii. 8), and it will be resumed at the end, dealing then with the apostate nation of Israel, who will have received Antichrist, with the nations around Israel, and with the apostate nations of Christendom. (Compare vers. 7, 8 with Rev. xix. 17, 18.) All

in Jerusalem are included in the sacrifice, from the king's sons down to Maktesh, the low-trading part of the city. Nothing can be hidden from the searching judgment of Jehovah, nor would the indifference which said, "Jehovah will not do good, neither will he do evil," be unpunished. How do *we* see it in these Laodicean days? In verse 14 it is the *great* day of Jehovah, and the land is devoured by the fire of His jealousy.

In chapter ii. there is a prophetic summons to the "nation not desired" (not desirable, margin, or, without shame, New Trans.) to gather *themselves* together, for they were about to be scattered by the day of Jehovah's anger. I presume the gathering together would be to *seek Jehovah*, as in Joel ii. 15, 16. Only that Zephaniah distinguishes between those without shame, and the meek of the earth (or land) (see chap. iii. 12), they would be hidden in the day of Jehovah's anger. (Compare Isa. xxvi. 20.) That day would deal with the Philistines on the west—they claimed the territory of Israel—and Moab and Ammon on the east—they reproached the people of Jehovah. The Philistine coast should be for the *remnant* of the house of Judah, and the remnant of *Jehovah's nation* should possess Moab and Ammon, and all the isles of the Gentiles should own Jehovah in worship. The Assyrian had

lifted himself up in the pride and *utter selfishness* of the human heart: "I am, and there is none else beside me." It had dwelt in careless greatness, and had been the scourge of Israel; it would become a desolation.

In chapter iii. Jerusalem is addressed. "Woe to her that is rebellious, or filthy and polluted, the oppressing city!" She had been chastened, but hearkened not, nor received correction, nor did she turn to Jehovah, making Him her confidence. Her rulers were violent, her priests profane, her prophets light and treacherous, yet a *just Jehovah who could do no wrong* was in the midst. That was His character, but the unjust knew no shame. He had cut off nations and their dwelling-places, and had dealt with them; and as to Jerusalem, had said, "Surely they will fear," but they corrupted all their doings. Had they received instruction their dwelling should not be cut off. In the place where righteousness should dwell there was iniquity; even the presence of Jehovah did not deter them. What then could be done?

"Wait ye upon me, saith Jehovah." This is the prophetic word, and it passes on to the end, when Jehovah would assemble the nations and kingdoms, Jerusalem among them, to pour upon them His indignation, for all the earth should be devoured by the fire of His jealousy. (Compare Isa. xxiv.) Righteousness could not

be learned in Jerusalem, even Jehovah's presence could not produce it, but when His judgments are in the earth its inhabitants will learn righteousness. Hence in verse 9 the peoples would learn a *pure* language, free from lies and deceit. They would serve Jehovah and call upon His name with one accord. Those of Israel scattered beyond the rivers of Cush (the Nile and Euphrates), now "*my suppliants*," would bring Jehovah's offering, and be ashamed at all their doings. Pride and haughtiness would be taken away, and an afflicted and poor people left, who would trust in the name of Jehovah. (Compare ver. 2.)

Note, the presentation of Christ in grace to them, and their rejection of Him, and consequent judgment, the Spirit does not give by Zephaniah. The question of Israel's *utter failure* as placed in the land by Jehovah with His holy temple in the midst is the subject. Israel's failure brings the judgment on the nations as well as on themselves, but the spared remnant, the afflicted and poor people, are brought into peace.

In verse 14 there is the summons to the daughters of Zion to sing, be glad, and rejoice. His judgments are taken away by Jehovah Himself. It is said again, He is *in the midst of thee*, and again in verse 17, "Jehovah, thy God *in the midst of thee* is mighty: he will

save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." It is very beautiful to see how Zephaniah brings, as it were, Jehovah into the midst of Israel. In the wilderness of old that was the position He chose, gathering His people around Himself, but how had He been grieved! Yet faith could always count upon Him, "Jehovah will not forsake his people for his great name's sake." (1 Sam. xii. 22.) He had given them His name. (Exo. xxxiv. 6, 7.) So in Isaiah lviii. 9, when they would cry, He would say "Here I am." That which makes many of the Psalms so beautiful is that Jehovah Himself and His character form the theme of the Spirit's utterances. (See Psalms xxxiv. 2; cxi.; cxlv.; cxlvi.; cxlvii.) The godly "speak good of his name." The prophecy closes with Jehovah making the inhabitants of Zion a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth. While praise is waiting (or is silent) for God in Zion (Psa. lxxv. 1), the assembly has the presence of the Lord in the midst when gathered together, with all the blessing, joy and worship which that presence brings with it. The assembly's transference to heaven will fill the heavens with praise and open the way for the earth to bask in the light which shines from thence. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad." (Psa. xcvi. 11.)

HAGGAI (FESTIVE).

WE now pass on some hundred and ten years from the time of Zephaniah. The captives in Babylon had returned to Jerusalem through the decree of Cyrus and had begun to rebuild the temple according to that decree. (See Ezra i.-iii.) But we learn from Ezra iv. that the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin caused the work to stop by means of a letter addressed by them to the Persian king Artaxerxes. God allowed this to succeed, so that the indifference of the returned captives to His interests might be manifested. Haggai unfolds this moral condition of the people; they acquiesced in the work of the house of God ceasing—saying, “The time is not come, the time that Jehovah’s house should be built.” Jehovah answers by the prophet, “Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?” Thus saith Jehovah, “Consider [set your heart on] your ways.” Things had not gone well with them, and why? Because Jehovah’s house lay waste, and they ran every man to their own houses. The order to cease by Artaxerxes might be pleaded. And they—a

feeble few—what could they do? But the LORD God of *heaven* who commanded Cyrus to build Him a house at Jerusalem was the Jehovah of *hosts* for Israel. Again He says, “Set your heart on your ways . . . build the house; and *I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified.*” Their labour for themselves had been profitless. *The prophetic spirit arouses Zerubabel and Joshua and the remnant of the people from their indifference, and Jehovah’s message, “I am with you,” comes to them through Jehovah’s messenger. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” the apostle triumphantly asks. Note it well, that though the decree of Darius was favourable to their building (Ezra vi.), yet they had already begun to build through being stirred up by the word of Jehovah through the prophet.*

Chapter ii. Again the word of Jehovah came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the seventh month. It was during the ordered time of keeping the feast of tabernacles. But things were not in order. Moreover, Jehovah had called for a drought upon the land (chap. i. 11), so that there was no keeping of the harvest and vintage festival of Israel, but they were *at work* on the house of Jehovah their God. Note that Solomon dedicated his finished work of the temple “in the feast which was in the seventh month” (2 Chron. v. 3)—that is

the feast of tabernacles. Jehovah calls their attention to the nothingness *in their eyes* of their labour as compared with the temple of Solomon. But Jehovah encourages them saying, "I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts." In their own eyes all might be feeble, but the word of Jehovah and His Spirit remained with them, as when they came out of Egypt. "Fear ye not." Moreover, in a little while and Jehovah of hosts would shake things in heaven and on earth and in the sea, and all the nations; and "*the desire of all nations*" should come. In God's mind Christ is the hope of the Gentiles. (Isa. xi. 10; Rom. xv. 12.) He only can bring in blessing for them. (Gen. xxii. 18; Gal. iii. 16.) Moreover, *that house*—it is looked at as *Jehovah's house* (though built then in weakness, but in the faith of His word) He would fill with glory. The mere wood and stones they built with might be, and were thrown down, and will be again in the shaking of all things, but the working of the Spirit of Jehovah in the remnant would abide—their work did not die with them. So in the building of the heavenly temple, what is of Christ abides, yet it is still growing to a holy temple in the Lord. When Christ has put all the living stones in their place, then the assembly will be the vessel of His glory. Zechariah vi. 12 shews that Christ will build the temple

and bear the glory. The working which His Spirit wrought by the returned remnant in the days of Haggai will be taken up by Christ in the coming day and He will glorify the house of His glory. (Isa. lx. 7.) Nothing is lost that is done for Christ. "Your labour is not in vain in the Lord." The house then being built in weakness is thus identified with the glory of the day of Christ, and its latter glory would be greater than the former. Such is the answer to the question in verse 3.

Then in the ninth month the law of clean and unclean is declared by the priests. One bearing holy flesh in his garment could not make bread or wine or oil clean by coming in contact with it; but one unclean by a dead body could affect any of those things and render them unclean. A momentous principle for us. A Christian cannot render the world clean by getting into association with it, but touching death can defile a Christian, and the world is the place of death. It is probably the unhallowed associations of which we read in Ezra ix. 1, 2, which had rendered the people unclean, as well as their stay in Babylon. But when they had Jehovah's interest before them He at once says, "From this day will I bless you." Moreover, all the Gentile powers that had opposed and oppressed them would be put down, and heaven and earth shaken;

but in that day when everything was shaking, the royalty of the house of David, the elect one of Jehovah—represented then by Zerubabel—should be as a signet. It can be none other than Christ who is addressed. (Compare Isa. xlii. 1-4.)



ZECHARIAH (THE LORD REMEMBERED).

HIS prophecy dates about two months after that of Haggai, but he was joined with Haggai in stirring up the Jews to build the temple. (Ezra v. 1.) The key to his prophecy seems to be in verse 3, "Return *unto me*, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will return unto you." It was not enough that they had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon if they had not returned *to Him*. What were they? Poor servants of the Gentile powers still, but Jehovah of hosts shewing them mercy. What an encouragement to turn to Him! Their fathers had gone astray, and Jehovah's words had taken hold of them in judgment. Now, would *they* let His words take hold of *them* in mercy? We get the answer in verse 16. So far *the word* of Jehovah.

In verse 7 the prophet is accorded *a vision* by the same word. He sees by night a man riding upon a red horse among *the myrtle trees* (a sign of prosperity). In verse 11 he is said to be the angel of Jehovah (see Exo. xxiii. 20, 21), and the red horse would appear from chapter vi. 2 to be the Babylonish power which the angel was using; behind were bay horses

and white—the Persian and Greek powers. The angel explains first that they were sent of Jehovah to walk to and fro through the earth. In chapter vi. the horses there are explained to be the four spirits of the heavens. They represent (I judge) certain impulses among the nations on earth, for, after all, there is a controlling power over the movements of the powers that be, though the prince of the power of the air may seek to direct them in self-will and evil. At that moment all the earth was at rest. How wonderfully God can overrule the movements of men for the accomplishment of His thoughts—thoughts of mercy towards Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. The angel appeals to Jehovah with the well known cry of “How long?” and immediately Jehovah answers with good and comfortable words. Who is this Intercessor? Surely it must be Christ in Spirit. These good and comfortable words are found in verses 15–17. Then verses 18–21 shew that if the horns of the Gentiles had scattered Judah, Jehovah could employ means to fray them (or affright them) and eventually to cast them out, for this latter depended upon their obedience. (See chap. vi. 15, which closes this part of the prophecy.)

Chapter ii. The vision now shews to the prophet the *thoughts of God* as to Jerusalem.

A man is before him with a measuring line, but he does not measure it, for its extent is to be as the open country without walls, on account of the multitude of men and cattle therein. "And I, saith Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." Contrast the *judicial protection*—"a wall of fire"—with the "jasper wall" of the heavenly city. Thereupon there is a summons to flee from the land of the north. There is a *moral* reason for it. What communion could there be between the daughter of Zion and the daughter of Babylon? Jehovah had chosen Zion, and if He had so far loosed the bands of their captivity, so that a remnant had returned to Jerusalem, now, would they, as well as those still in Babylon, recognise themselves as children of Zion and come thither as such? Jehovah would be the glory in the midst (ver. 5) and it is "*after the glory*" had come that it would be manifest that Jehovah of Hosts *had sent* the angel of His presence both to the nations that spoiled them and to them. It was His direct intervention and interest in Zion. (Compare Rev. xiv. 1-5.) In John's gospel this word "sent" is constantly used with regard to Christ. "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son . . . for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world*" marks its characteristic

use. It is the blessed revelation of the grace of God in the Son of His love. The glory given to Christ and shared by the saints will cause the world *to know* that the Son *was sent* by the Father. Zechariah uses the words "hath sent me" thrice in this chapter.

Verse 10. The daughter of Zion is called on to rejoice (in chap. ix. "rejoice greatly"), for Jehovah would come and dwell in the midst of Zion, and many nations would join themselves to Jehovah in that day. If these are Jehovah's thoughts, "Let all flesh keep silence before him," these thoughts will be made good in another generation. The sent One would come and be valued at thirty pieces of silver, and instead of all flesh being silent nation would rise against nation. All will be hushed into silence and rest when He comes in glory, after having risen up from His holy habitation. In a preliminary sense, He had risen up, but the question of sin and righteousness had yet to be settled.

In chapter iii. this question is figuratively gone into. Joshua the high priest is seen standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. It is evident that Joshua was the representative of Jerusalem. Joshua's filthy garments tallied with the state of Jerusalem. Here we have opened to us what passes in the unseen world.

Satan is there as the adversary of Jerusalem, *God's* city, and of Joshua, *God's* high priest, but Jehovah had in grace taken up every question. Joshua is silent before the angel of Jehovah and before Satan. He had been in Babylon, an unclean place, and besides, there was all the former filth of the city he represented. Jehovah rebukes Satan, and vindicates Joshua as a brand plucked out of the fire—so was Jerusalem. The filthy garments and the iniquity are taken away, and festal robes are put upon him (compare Luke xv. 22), and at the prophet's words a mitre or diadem (Isa. lxii. 3) is set upon his head. The angel of Jehovah stood by, all was done in His presence, and He then protested to Joshua: "If thou wilt walk in *my* ways, and if thou wilt keep *my* charge, then thou shalt also judge *my* house, and shalt also keep *my* courts," and his goings should be among his fellows. These with Joshua are said to be *men of sign*, or type. Christ the Branch (Jer. xxiii. 5), and Christ the foundation stone (Isa. xxviii. 16), is the One ever before the mind of God; the Spirit bears witness to Him; the eyes of Jehovah rest on Him; there is no "if" with Him as with Joshua. The iniquity of the land, yet to be stained with His blood, would be removed in one day, and rest and prosperity be the portion of its inhabitants. Thus is set before

us in type, and written for a people yet to come, the deep interest of Jehovah in recovering for Himself that which He had chosen, and yet was defiled, "a brand plucked out of the fire."

But Jehovah had further thoughts as to Jerusalem (Isa. lxii. 1), but the prophet had to be waked (not that he was asleep, but *as a man* wakened out of sleep) in order to enter into the purpose of God, that Jerusalem should be a vessel of light in the earth. (Isa. lx. 3.) In chapter iv. he is given to see what was in the mind of God as to Israel: a golden candlestick with a bowl and seven lamps, as in the tabernacle of old; but in this, seven pipes to the seven lamps, also two olive trees on the right and left of the bowl. The olive branches (ver. 12) beside the golden pipes emptied the golden oil *out of themselves*. The prophet asks as to them, and the angel replies, "*Knowest thou not what these be?*" Then the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel is given: "Not by might, nor by power, *but by my spirit.*" Human effort and means are entirely set aside in the mind of God, and the power of the Spirit alone will accomplish the thoughts of God. The great mountain—the Persian power which in that day had issued the edict to stop building—should become a plain, and the top stone of Jehovah's temple is to be brought forth by Zerubbabel with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." There is

no limit to the work of grace. The work of Zerubbabel might seem small and insignificant—the adversaries said that if a fox went up their walls they would fall. But who would despise the day of small things if the eyes of Jehovah were rejoicing to see the work proceed under the hands of Zerubbabel? The olive trees are explained to be the *two sons of oil*, which stand before the *Lord of the whole earth* (compare Josh. iii. 11), that is, the priesthood and royalty of Christ (“He shall be a priest upon his throne”) will sustain the light of God in Israel.

In chapter v. there is first the dealing with individual evil *in the land*, the curse of the flying roll should *go forth*, and enter into the house of the thief, and of him who falsely swore by the name of Jehovah. Then there is, I judge, collective (or a system of) evil figured by a woman in an ephah; it has *its limits* in the ephah. (Compare Matt. xiii. 33, where we have a woman hiding leaven in three measures (sata) of meal—three sata were equivalent to an ephah.) I do not say that it is *the same* sphere in both passages, but in each case it is a *limited* sphere. The ephah is borne away by two women with *the wind* in their wings to the land of Shinar, where Babel was built, afterwards it became Babylon. There “wickedness” finds its own place, as righteous-

ness will have its place in Jerusalem. The *two* women seem to be a twofold form of systematic evil, which ends finally in Babylon (Rev. xvii.), though in Zechariah the character of ancient Babylon is more in view. Still, we have the contrast of Jerusalem and Babylon in chapters iv. and v., as in the Book of Revelation the mystical Babylon is in contrast to the holy city Jerusalem.

Chapter vi. Under the figure of four chariots with various coloured horses, the four Gentile kingdoms are shewn in vision to Zechariah. In Daniel they are presented first, as embodied in *one* image (chap. ii.), and secondly, as four ravaging wild beasts (chap. vii.). Here they are chariots—war chariots I presume—but the horses in them are the chief feature; that is, their *movements* are before us rather than their character. Of the red, nothing is said. The kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar was already effete. The black horses evidently represent the Medo-Persian kingdom—they *go forth* into the North country, that is, toward Babylon, and of them it is said that they had quieted Jehovah's Spirit there, that is, in His dealings with the Chaldean power. The white, who *go forth* after them represent the Grecian kingdom of Alexander. Note, they *go forth* as the spirits of the heavens (certain providentially ordered impulses) from standing before *the Lord of all the earth*.

Christ is doubtless that, though He has not yet taken to Himself His great power as in Revelation xi. The grised and bay (or strong) give a double character to the Roman power; the grised *go forth* to the *South* country, that is, to Egypt. The Roman power put down Egypt. We must remember that the centre from whence God looks at things on the earth is Jerusalem. As in Daniel, the king of the South is the Egyptian power. The character of the bay, or strong, is that they walk to and fro through the earth as if it were all their own. The Roman power is not looked at here as being yet in open opposition to Christ.

Verses 9-15. *Crowns* are to be made, if so, it must be in view of some one, or ones, wearing them; yet for that present time they are only laid up *for a memorial in the temple of Jehovah*, but between the making them, and laying them up, "the BRANCH" is introduced. He grows up out of His own place (Isa. xi. 1.), and He it is who shall build the temple of Jehovah. Zerubbabel was but a typical precursor of Christ. Moreover, He shall *bear the glory*, and shall sit and rule upon His throne, and be a priest upon His throne as Melchizedec. The counsel of peace shall be between them both, that is, between Jehovah and the Branch. Here we have, not the providential careering of the horses going

forth from before the Lord of all the earth, but His direct rule, and the establishment of *what is counselled* as between Jehovah and His Messiah. Those afar off—strangers—would build in the temple (Isa. lx. 10.), which, in Zechariah's day, Israel would not allow. In the day to come they will be submissive to Christ. It would then be known that the angel of Jehovah *had been sent by Him*. (Compare John xvii. 21.) Chapter vi. closes the first part of the prophecy; all would come to pass at that time *if they would diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah*. This they did not do.

These six chapters form a most interesting subject because they consist of communications to the prophet by *the angel of Jehovah*, in whom, as the *sent one* of Jehovah, we recognise Christ *in Spirit*, and the thoughts and interests of His Spirit in Jerusalem (God's centre on the earth) are brought out. Alas, only to be met by indifference, neglect and rejection. (See Malachi.) None the less will they be accomplished in infinite wisdom in grace, as also by judicial dealings.

In chapter vii. messengers had come from *Bethel* (for so "the house of God" should be written) to inquire of Jehovah through the priests as to continuing the fasts they had observed when in captivity. We pass in this

from the interest shewn by Jehovah in Jerusalem and to the returned remnant, and from the communication of His thought by the sent one, to the state of the people. They had not found any joy or rest in the mercies of Jehovah. *Their heart* had not really *returned* to Jehovah, and He asks "Did ye at all fast *unto me*, even *to Me?*" That which would mark a return to Him would be that they acted according to that which He had manifested to them. (Vers. 9, 10.) It would have been in the spirit of the Lord's word to His disciples "that ye love one another *as I have loved you.*" But however little they entered into His mind, He would not give up His thoughts *as to Jerusalem*. He was jealous for it. He had returned to it, and would dwell in the midst. It should then be called "The city of truth, the mountain of Jehovah of Hosts, the holy mountain." It should yet be inhabited. We read in Nehemiah vii. 4 that the city was large, and *the people few*; and again in chapter xi. 1, 2, that the people offered themselves *willingly*—one in ten—to dwell at Jerusalem so as to furnish it with inhabitants. But Zechariah's prophecy, uttered before Nehemiah's day, goes further; Jehovah would save His people from the east and west to dwell in Jerusalem. (Compare Matt. xxiv. 31.) Jeremiah also speaks of this desire to return wrought in them when they

would answer to the watchman's cry, "Arise and let us go up to Zion, unto Jehovah our God," and go thither with weeping and supplications. (Chap. xxxi.) He would be their God in truth and righteousness.

Then comes the exhortation: Now let your hands be strong, *ye that hear the words of Jehovah* by the prophets that were in the day that the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid, that the temple might be built. (Ezra v. 1.) Before those days things went badly with the people, because God's city and God's temple were not their object. Now Jehovah would prosper the remnant and cause them to inherit blessing, and to be a blessing instead of a curse. Twice over Jehovah says to them "Fear ye not." (Compare Luke xii. 4.) At the same time their responsibility was to speak truth with their neighbour, and imagine no evil. Then the days of fasting (chap. vii. 2) should be turned into joyful feasts. (See Neh. viii. 10, 11.) Let them love the truth, the words of Jehovah; then many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before Him; and a despised Jew would be sought, that men from the nations might go with him, for they would see that God was with him. These two chapters form a section, in which the then present grace towards the remnant, and the

ultimate purpose of Jehovah are His answer by the prophet to mere formalism.

Chapter ix. We now come to *the burden* of the word of the Lord. The burden first rests on Damascus and the north—then on Tyre and Zidon, and on the cities of the Philistines on the sea coast of the west. The attack of Alexander the Great may be first alluded to, but the interest now centres (ver. 9) in the introduction of Zion's King. It is alluded to by both Matthew and John to shew the manner of His presenting Himself to the daughter of Zion, but the words "Rejoice greatly," and "having salvation" are omitted by the evangelists. The prophecy itself is fuller and passes on to the cutting off of all that could be the confidence of the flesh—the chariot and the battle bow—and introduces His speaking peace *to the nations* as calmly as when He stilled the waves of Galilee. And His dominion will be according to Psalm ii. 8. Moreover, the presence of the Lord in Zion (for the subject of the introduction of the King to Zion is looked at in its full result according to Psalm ii. 6, and His temporary rejection when He came thither in lowliness is not alluded to—it did not alter God's purpose) will be the stronghold of His people—prisoners of hope—in a day yet to come. The remainder of the chapter carries us on to the final triumph of

both Ephraim and Judah over their enemies. Zion's sons are raised up against the sons of Greece. This intimates that the old Grecian power will reappear in the conflicts of the last days. (See Dan. vii. 12.) Jehovah is seen over His people, going forth as the lightning (Matt. xxiv. 27), with power both to subdue and to defend. They are saved as the flock of His people, and the greatness and the beauty of Jehovah's people and land is celebrated. (Compare Psa. cxliv. 12-15.)

We come now to their *circumstances*—the feeding and tending of the saved flock. *Jehovah Himself* is their resource. Ask of Him, for neither idols nor diviners could give rain. They had no shepherd to tend them, and they were in distress. Jehovah of hosts visited them, and poor and in distress as they had been, would make the house of Judah His goodly (or majestic) horse in the battle. From Judah would come forth the corner stone (Isa. xxviii. 16), the nail (Isa. xxii. 23), the battle bow, and the Ruler. (Gen. xlix. 9, 10; Isa. ix. 6, 7; Micah v. 2.) Verse 6 looks on to the time when the *house of Joseph* should be saved, and mercy brought to both Judah and Joseph, of which the present mercy (chap. i. 16) was the prelude. They should be brought back from Egypt and Assyria. (Isa. xi. 15, 16; xxvii. 12, 13.) The mention of Assyria is remarkable, as it had

long ceased to be a kingdom, and the power of Babylon had also been broken. It shews that the Assyrian power will yet be revived in the little horn of Daniel viii., and the king of the north (Dan. xi.), but the power of both Assyria and Egypt would be brought down, and Israel shall walk up and down in the name of Jehovah.

So far we have *the purpose of Jehovah* with regard to Israel *in connection with the introduction of Messiah to Zion*. It was made known to the remnant brought back from Babylon, Jehovah would certainly fulfil it; but chapter xi. introduces the subject of the rejection of Messiah and its consequences. It opens with the fact of the crown (Lebanon) of Israel's land—its beauty and fertility—having been destroyed. "That goodly mountain, and Lebanon" which Moses desired to see. (Deut. iii. 25.) The oaks of Bashan (the nobles) are spoiled, and the shepherds howl. Jordan—the river of Israel (as the Nile was of Egypt, or the Euphrates of Babylon), with its wonderful associations—its pride had been also spoiled. It is *God's record* of that which history tells us. In such a state of things the prophet turns to the introduction of Messiah, and He is thus addressed, "Thus saith Jehovah my God, Feed the flock of slaughter," that is, the people of Israel, treated as a mere possession

by the Gentiles, and sold by their own shepherds. (See Matt. ix. 36.) Verse 6 speaks of the flock of slaughter as being "the inhabitants of the land" on whom Jehovah would no more have pity. The poor of this flock of slaughter are those that Messiah feeds: "Blessed be ye poor." Then He takes two official staves. One He calls Beauty, and the other Bands, and He fed these poor of the flock, but as to the shepherds—those who had not entered in by the door (John x.)—His soul loathed them, and they abhorred Him. (Matt. xii. 24-37.) He would no longer be the Shepherd of such a generation. But this involved the abandonment *then* of His office as Messiah. (Mark viii. 30, 31). Consequently He cut asunder the staff "Beauty," that He might break the covenant *with all the peoples*. The gathering of the peoples was to be to Shiloh (Gen. xlix. 10): both Isaiah and Micah speak of the *peoples* and many nations flowing to Jehovah's house. (Isa. ii. 3; Micah iv. 1.) The official staff being cut asunder, all *that* remains in abeyance. And the poor of the flock that waited on Him knew that it was the word of Jehovah.

Then another thing transpires. Jehovah definitely obliges them, so to speak, to say what *they* thought His Messiah was worth, and they valued Him at the price of a slave—thirty pieces of silver. (Exo. xxi. 32.) The

fulfilment of this and the casting to the potter is given in Matthew xxvii. 6, 7. He then cuts asunder the other staff—"Bands"—that He might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel—the uniting them in one stick, according to Ezekiel xxxvii. 16, 17, awaits the day when the dry bones of *the whole house* of Israel shall live. Israel and Judah will then appoint themselves one Head. (Hos i. 11.)

But further, the instruments of a foolish shepherd were to be taken, for Jehovah would raise up a shepherd in the land, who would be the very opposite to the good Shepherd. Woe is pronounced against this "idol" shepherd (that is, empty, vain, worthless—"a thing of nought," Jer. xiv. 14) that leaveth the flock. It refers to one who comes in his own name (John v. 43), the Antichrist of the last days. This leads to the burden of the word of Jehovah for Israel. (Chap. xii.) He speaks as the One who stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him—the Creator. He would make Jerusalem a cup of trembling to *all the peoples* round about when they shall be in siege against Judah and Jerusalem. This cannot refer to the Roman attack on Jerusalem by Titus, for that was not by "all the peoples round about." It will be in the last days that Jehovah will make Jerusalem a burdensome

stone to all peoples—all should be cut in pieces, though all the nations of the earth should be gathered together against it. Jehovah will use the governors of Judah to devour all the peoples round about, and Jerusalem shall be inhabited in her own place, in Jerusalem. Then, in the day of Jerusalem's deliverance, Jehovah will pour upon *the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem* the spirit of grace and of supplications. The sense of grace causes the heart to turn to Him who shews it. Of Paul, the archenemy of Christ, it was said, "Behold he prayeth." But more, they will know how deep their need, and how full the grace that has met it, when they look on Him whom they pierced, and learn that the Jehovah who has delivered them—the Creator of verse 1—is the Jesus whom they pierced. There is then such a sorrow, that Joel's solemn *assembly* (chap. ii. 15–17) could not ease it; it is felt *individually*, each heart knowing its own bitterness, from the royal family down to every family of the remnant. There is no full sense of peace until the heart has had to do with God alone—the wife of one's bosom cannot intermeddle with it. It is the time referred to in Revelation i. 7, when will be fulfilled in Israel the Lord's word to Thomas. (John xx. 29.) With Christians, their spiritual deliverance (Rom. vi., vii., viii.) generally comes

after forgiveness is known, as in Romans v. I say "generally," because pious people, brought up under law, are sometimes more troubled about their sinful self than their sins, and how to be free of self and sin occupies them. Then they go through somewhat of Israel's experience, as they learn that self was bad enough to reject the precious Saviour.

But in that day of humiliation a fountain shall be opened (chap. xiii.) to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the tribes of Israel were not yet gathered back) for sin and for uncleanness. The house of David in both Ahaz and Manasseh had introduced the sin and uncleanness of idolatry into the temple of Jehovah, and Jerusalem had rejected Christ and will have had the abomination that makes desolate set up in the temple by the false Christ they will have received—the ten tribes did not crucify Christ. It is not *guilt* here, we have had the individual owning of guilt in the last chapter. Here it is the house of David and the beloved city. It is no doubt a fountain of water here of the same character as the water of separation typified in Numbers xix. for those unclean by a dead body—here the dead body of Christ. The purification is by the word which in living power and efficacy brings the sense of the sufferings of Christ for sin and uncleanness home to the conscience.

Their special sin of idolatry—through listening to Satan by means of false prophets (see Deut. xiii.) instead of to God—is banished by Jehovah from the land, and the people themselves are energetic in the same—even to a father slaying a son—and the prophets themselves will be ashamed of their vision, and shall no more deceive.

Verse 5 brings in the voice of Messiah. One who did not strive nor cry, nor was His voice heard in the streets—He does not *claim* here the place of prophet, but of a bondman—a tiller of the ground, for Adam (man) had fallen into that condition, and Jesus accepted the form of a servant. (Phil. ii.) Read the verse thus: “He shall say, I am no prophet. I am a tiller of the ground, for man [Adam] acquired me as bondman from my youth.” Jesus was here in lowliness and humiliation according to the ordinance of God, and this brought Him into the place where He was wounded in the house of *His friends*. He bore the marks in His hands. And yet further, the prophetic word announced that the sword of Jehovah would awake against “the man that is *my fellow*, saith Jehovah of hosts”; but He is also the Shepherd of Jehovah’s sheep. *Jehovah* smites the Shepherd and the sheep are scattered. (Matt. xxvi. 31.); the effect of this smiting is told out in Isaiah liii. There is also the scattering of

Israel from their land, even as the disciples were scattered, but regathered, when Jesus rose, in the peace of accomplished redemption. Jehovah turns His hand upon *the little ones*. (John xviii. 8, 9.) It becomes the occasion of Jehovah judging between cattle and cattle. (Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 17.) It is those *who are in the land*, of whom two-thirds are cut off—it may be by the march of the Assyrian through the land, as described in Isaiah x. 28–32—the remaining third are brought through the fire of tribulation, and refined, and owned as His people by Jehovah, and He their God.

Chapter xiv. The assembling of *the nations* against *Jerusalem* in battle. It is the day of Jehovah's coming. *He* assembles them. The city is taken, and half go into captivity. The details of the attack are not given—the passage probably embraces both the attacks of the Assyrian (Isa. xxviii., xxix.)—Jehovah's dealing *with the city* occupies the mind of the Spirit—the guilty yet beloved city—the residue are not cut off from it. Jehovah goes forth to fight with those nations—they are touching *His* city. They have been gathered there into “the valley of decision” according to Joel, and as “sheaves to the floor” as Micah speaks. Other prophets also give details. Zechariah continues, “His feet shall stand on the mount of Olives”—the mount from whence He was received up.

(See Acts i. 11.) See also Amos i. 1 for the earthquake. The valley caused by the rending of the mount seems to correspond with the "valley of decision" in Joel, but the great point is, the coming of Jehovah my God, and *all the saints or holy ones* with Him, for angels will come with Him—Jehovah—Jesus. (Luke ix. 26.)

Verse 6 shews us that it will be a day of obscurity—"of clouds"—but the day of Jehovah will not have its changes of day and night, it shall be one day, and when it closes it shall be light. The next great point is that living waters go forth from Jerusalem to the eastern and western seas. Jerusalem will be a centre of blessing, and will be lifted up as on a plateau. (Isa. ii. 2; Micah iv. 1.) Those who have warred against God's city, whatever man's thoughts might be, are consumed by a special plague, and *the remnant* of the nations that come up against Jerusalem—those not cut off—shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah Sabaoth, at the feast of tabernacles. It was a feast of thanksgiving for Israel established in blessing, and the stranger had his part in it. (Compare Psa. lxxvii.) If they go not up, the blessing of heaven, rain, would be withheld.

Everything in Jerusalem shall be "holiness to Jehovah," even its common pots. All who

came to Jerusalem to sacrifice will be able to use them for seething the flesh, and no Canaanite (or Trafficker) shall be henceforth in the house of Jehovah of hosts. We may here note how the Spirit foresaw what Jesus afterwards found in John ii. 14-16. His then cleansing of the temple foreshadowed this day of holiness in Jerusalem and Judah. Not only holiness, but free grace characterises the city of God. It will be "the joy of the whole earth"—the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High—God is in the midst of her. The river of God goes out from thence. Such is the consummation to be reached from the blessed fact recorded in chapter i. 16, that Jehovah had returned to Jerusalem *with mercies*. Mercy triumphing over evil—even the rejection and piercing of Christ.



MALACHI (MESSENGER OF THE LORD.)

"THE *burden* of the word of Jehovah to Israel by Malachi." It is that which Jehovah would lay upon their consciences. Would they consider it? "I have loved you, saith Jehovah": that is, the nation of Israel; but the address was to the remnant returned from captivity. It is not the love which rests on the sinner who believes in Jesus, and which brings him individually into the blessing to be found in Him. So in Revelation iii. the Lord could say to the angel of the church at Laodicea, "As many as I love." It ever remains true that Christ loves the church. Laodicea was characterised by insensibility to this love, so was Israel, they said, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" What had led Jehovah to take up Jacob? He was not a lovable character. It could be nothing but the sovereignty of love in Jehovah Himself. There was nothing in Jacob to draw it out; it was the election of *grace* according to God's own purpose. Before the children were born it was said, "The elder shall serve the younger." But "Esau have I hated" was not said until the days of Malachi.

In Esau had then been found the total infidelity which despises God and His ways. Esau could have received blessing in submitting to those ways, and in owning that Jacob was to be the channel of God's blessing in the earth. Instead, there had been hatred to his brother,—in reality hatred to God—and Jehovah had dealt with Edom on account of it. There was no humiliation before God, but they said, "We are impoverished, but will return and build again the desolate places." They might, but Jehovah would throw down and Edom should be called "The territory of wickedness." Jehovah would be magnified in His indignation against them.

The priests are addressed in verse 6—those brought into a position of approach to the sanctuary of Jehovah—"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master," but where was shewn the honour and fear due to Jehovah? The priests despised Jehovah's name, there was utter insensibility to the claims of that name. Ye offer polluted bread, and the blind and the lame, and the sick cattle in sacrifice—would they offer it to their Governor? Would he be pleased with it? Would anything do for God? Many professors think so to-day. Yet they would pray God *to be gracious to them*. They would not shut the doors, nor kindle a fire on His altar for nothing. Com-

pare with this the desire of a son of Korah in Psalm lxxxiv. 10: "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God." I have no delight in *you*, saith Jehovah, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. Yet He would make His name to be honoured among the Gentiles, and incense and a pure oblation should be offered *by them* to His name. As to the service of Jehovah they (the priests) said, What a weariness! and they puffed at it. Part of this service was to put the shew-bread, with frankincense on it, upon the table of Jehovah. The meaning of this service was contemptible to them. Those, though priests, who treated Jehovah in such a way would be cursed, and Jehovah would be revered among the Gentiles. (Compare Matt. viii. 10.) Yet we have seen in Zechariah xiv. 21, that a day is coming when every pot in Jerusalem should be holiness to Jehovah of hosts.

In chapter ii. Jehovah continues His word—His commandment—to the priests through Malachi the prophet. Would they hear and lay it to heart, and so give glory to His name? If not, He would send a curse among them and defile their seed. Jehovah's commandment was sent to them in order that His covenant might still be with Levi—a covenant made with that tribe before the introduction of the system of worship and sacrifices connected with

the tabernacle. (Exo. xxxii. 26; Num. iii. 6; Deut. xxxiii. 9.) This special place of separation to Jehovah and His law the priests had corrupted—they had respected persons in administering the law, when the people ought to have been able in truth to seek the law at their mouth. God would make them contemptible.

In verse 11 *the people*, Judah, are before us. They also were unfaithful to their place of separation from the nations. They were again marrying idolatrous wives and putting away their Jewish wives. This looseness had been judged in the days of Ezra, and had reappeared, but the way in which it is spoken of introduces their disregard for the *breach of a covenant in general*, besides the breach made in putting away their wives. Jehovah *hated* putting away—His mercy toward Israel shewed that. In Luke xvi. 13-18, the people had been unfaithful stewards. The law and the prophets were theirs, but they were untrue to God's covenants with them—serving mammon—suddenly the eighteenth verse is dropped in by the Lord—they were untrue to the marriage bond. "Take heed that ye deal not unfaithfully," verse 16, enunciates *a general principle*. Moreover they had wearied Jehovah *with their words*, and, like the Pharisees in the Lord's day, they maintained their outward privilege

as being the nation of God's delight, notwithstanding that they regarded evil-doing as of no consequence with Him. Where, they said, is the God of judgment?

Chapter iii. introduces the messenger of Jehovah. "The law and the prophets were *until John*." (Luke xvi. 16.) John Baptist was this messenger sent to prepare the way before the Lord Jesus. (Matt. xi. 10.) He (the Lord Jesus) is described here as the messenger, or Angel of the covenant (Exo. xxiii. 20, 21; Isa. lxiii. 9), *whom they delighted in*—this was a characteristic thought in Israel. He would come suddenly to His temple. "Behold, he shall come." Here His first and second coming (as we speak) are looked at as a whole. His second coming joins itself to the first, when Christ laboured in vain and spent His strength for nought so far as the gathering of Israel is in question. Hence the question is asked, "Who may abide the day of his coming," or "Who shall stand when *he appeareth*?" When the Lord was born into this world there was *every testimony* as to His person, but He did not *appear* in His own proper glory. He acted as Lord of the temple at the beginning of His ministry when He found it a house of merchandise, and again at the close He found it a den of thieves. (John ii. 16; Matt. xxi. 13.) When He does appear, He will be like a refiner's

fire, and like fuller's soap. The sons of Levi He will purge that they may offer to the Lord in righteousness, and the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord as in the days of old. (See 2 Chron. xxix. 27 ; xxx. 27.) At the same time Jehovah would be a swift witness against all evil and against those who did not fear Jehovah. He was unchangeable both in regard to evil, as well as in shewing mercy, hence the sons of Jacob were not *consumed*. Jehovah's chastenings always secured a remnant for Himself, otherwise there would have been a full end.

From the days of their fathers they had departed from His statutes, and had not kept them. Then comes the exhortation (as in Zech. i. 3), "Return unto me, and I will return unto you"—only here it is in view of His coming—but there is the same insensibility as before, "Wherein shall we return?" They were not rendering to Him His tithes and offerings, yet if they did bring them *to Him* with return of heart, He would open the windows of heaven, and pour out such a blessing that all nations should call them blessed and their land delightful. This has yet to be fulfilled (Isa. lxii. 4) when they return to the Lord.

But the state of the people generally seemed to be one of hopeless indifference. Their words

were stout *against Jehovah*, yet they said, What have we been speaking against Thee? Jehovah answers, "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance [or charge]. . . . And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up." Compare Psalm lxxiii., where a soul in real exercise is tempted to compare his lot unfavourably with the wicked, until he went into the sanctuary of God. There, in God's presence, he forms a true judgment, and owns that he had been foolish and ignorant, and yet all the while he had been an object of God's upholding care and solicitude. The remnant in Malachi (ver. 16) hardly reach the sanctuary of God, but they have the beginning of wisdom—they feared Jehovah (Isa. l. 10)—and this threw them together, so that they spake often one to another; and this fear of Jehovah separated them with discernment from the wicked, though the wicked might call themselves by the name of Israel. Jehovah observed it, and heard as they spoke together, "And a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." This is the positive side, but there is also another side in connection with

the coming day that burns as an oven. They are *spared* "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

In the last verse there is the return (looked for in ver. 7) by this remnant, and there is *discernment* consequently between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. This discernment is found in fearing God. (Psa. xxv. 14.) The saint through the fear of the Lord gets it—"the secret of Jehovah"—before the day comes which shall be revealed in fire. (1 Cor. iii. 13.) The wicked under God's searching judgment are consumed by it. When that takes place the Sun of righteousness will arise unto the God-fearing remnant. It will shine *upon* them, but *in* the saints of this period. Matthew xiii. 42, 43 shews that the righteous are associated with Christ—they shine forth *as the Sun*, that is, with Him, in heavenly glory, after the tares have been cast into a furnace of fire. The remnant in Malachi prove the healing beams of the Sun of righteousness, and grow up under its influence. They are also joined with Christ in treading down the wicked. (See Psa. cxlix. 5-9.) Note the different portion of the church saints: the bright and morning Star shines for them, they are not associated with the rule of righteousness in treading down the wicked, but in the light of the morning Star they say, "Whoso-

ever will, let him take the water of life freely.”
(Rev. xxii. 16, 17.)

Malachi closes the prophets with recall to the law given to Israel by the hand of Moses. The law was, as Paul expresses it, the school-master for Israel up to Christ. He must come to bring in the new covenant. But before that great and dreadful day of Jehovah which precedes the rising of the Sun of righteousness an Elijah ministry is promised. Such a ministry would set things morally right. In the Book of Proverbs, after the statement that “the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge” (chap. i. 7), the next injunction is: “My son, hear the instruction of thy father,” and in Psalm lxxviii. 5 the fathers who had been entrusted with God’s law and testimony are enjoined to make them known to their children. It is God’s way of instruction. Ephesians vi. 1-4 charges children to obey their parents, giving them honour, and parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The disregard of moral obligations would bring the land under the ban of Jehovah. It is so with Israel to-day, and will be so until a new generation is brought forth. The New Testament puts all these moral obligations in their right and proper place by the introduction of the kingdom of God in the Person of Christ.

Though *the order* of the books of the Old

Testament, as we have it, is different from that followed in the Hebrew Bible, yet we have to recognise the over-ruling hand of God in their present arrangement. And it is not without significance that the last word should be "curse" or "ban"—a thing devoted to destruction—the word is used in Deuteronomy vii. 26; Joshua vi. 18; Isaiah xxxiv. 5. While the New Testament closes with, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

"O DEPTH OF RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM
AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW UNSEARCH-
ABLE HIS JUDGMENTS, AND UNTRACEABLE HIS
WAYS! FOR OF HIM, AND THROUGH
HIM, AND FOR HIM ARE ALL THINGS: TO HIM
BE GLORY FOR EVER. AMEN.

ROMANS XI. 33, 36 (NEW TRANS.).

