

# CHAPTER 33

## INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 33

This chapter treats of the prophet's duty, and the people's sins; contains a vindication of the justice of God; a threatening of destruction to those who remained in the land after the taking of the city; and a detection of the hypocrisy of the prophet's hearers. The duty of a watchman in general is declared, (<sup>2530</sup>Ezekiel 33:1-6), an application of this to the prophet, (<sup>2531</sup>Ezekiel 33:7): the sum of whose business is to warn the wicked man of his wickedness; and the consequence of doing, or not doing it, is expressed, (<sup>2532</sup>Ezekiel 33:8,9), an objection of the people, and the prophet's answer to it, (<sup>2533</sup>Ezekiel 33:10,11), who is bid to acquaint them, that a righteous man trusting to his righteousness, and sinning, should not live; and that a sinner repenting of his sins should not die, (<sup>2534</sup>Ezekiel 33:12-16), the people's charge of inequality in the ways of God is retorted upon them, and removed from the Lord, and proved against them, (<sup>2535</sup>Ezekiel 33:17-20), then follows a prophecy, delivered out after the news was brought of the taking of the city, threatening with ruin those that remained in the land, confident of safety, and that for their sins, which are particularly enumerated, (<sup>2536</sup>Ezekiel 33:21-29), and the chapter is closed with a discovery of the hypocrisy of those that attended the prophet's ministry, (<sup>2537</sup>Ezekiel 33:30-33).

**Ver. 1.** *Again the word of the Lord came unto me, &c.*] After the delivery of various prophecies concerning the ruin of other nations, the Ammonites, Tyrians, and Egyptians, a fresh prophecy comes from the Lord concerning the Jews:

*saying*; as follows:

**Ver. 2.** *Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, &c.*] The Jews, of whom the prophet was; and designs those who were with him in the captivity; and who, having behaved so ill, the Lord will not own them for his people, but calls them the prophet's people, and the children of them:

*and say unto them, when I bring the sword upon a land*; a foreign enemy with an army to invade it, or any other judgment; for there is no public

calamity whatever that comes upon a people, but what is by the order, direction, or permission of the Lord. The Targum is,

“those that kill with the sword;”

an army of men that enter into a land sword in hand, with an intent to conquer and destroy: if the people of the land take a man of their coasts: that lives upon their borders, and so is acquainted with all the places where it is most likely an enemy should enter; or a man out of the midst of them, as the Targum; so this phrase sometimes signifies, (~~CHAP~~ Genesis 47:2), one of their own people, who might be thought to have their good and safety at heart, and might be trusted:

*and set him for their watchman*: on some place of eminence; on the walls, or in a tower of a frontier town, from whence he might descry the enemy coming at a distance.

**Ver. 3.** *If what he seeth the sword come upon the land, &c.*] Or those that kill with the sword, as the Targum; as soon as he observes a body of armed men, more or less, marching towards the borders of the land with a manifest intention to enter and invade it:

*he blow the trumpet, and warn the people*; warn the people by blowing the trumpet, the signal agreed on; by which they would understand that an enemy was at hand, or danger near; or warn them by word of mouth, as well as by the trumpet, where he could do it, and when it was necessary.

**Ver. 4.** *Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh no warning, &c.*] Does not mind the notice given him; is incredulous of the danger he is in, or negligent of providing for his safety; fancies it is an alarm, and nothing else; and imagines there is no real danger, or what is a mere trifle; or, that the enemy is at a great distance, and it is time enough to provide for his defence:

*if the sword come and take him away*; those that kill with the sword, as the Targum, come suddenly on him, and take away his life, or carry him captive: his blood shall be upon his own head; the guilt of his slaughter, as the Targum; the sin will be his own; it must be brought in wilful murder; no blame can be laid upon any but himself; the watchman will be clear.

**Ver. 5.** *He heard the sound of the trumpet, &c.*] The alarm of the enemy being at hand, and so was inexcusable:

*and took not warning*; which that gave him:

*his blood shall be upon him*; the fault shall be imputed to himself, and not another; and he must bear it himself, and answer for it, and not the watchman:

*but he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul*; who, hearing the sound of the trumpet, prepares for his own defence, and provides for his safety, he shall save his life, and not fall into the enemies' hands.

**Ver. 6.** *But if the watchman see the sword come*, &c.] Or those that kill with the sword, as the Targum is; so far doing the duty of his office as to be in the watchtower, and not asleep:

*and yet blow not the trumpet*: to give the people notice of the enemy, and of their danger:

*and the people be not warned*; but in the utmost security, not apprehending themselves to be in any danger at all:

*if the sword come and take any person from among them*; even though but a single person:

*he is taken away in his iniquity*: having had no time to have it set before him, and to be convinced, and to repent of it, and seek for pardoning mercy for it; it is a dreadful thing thus to be taken out of the world, and snatched into hell at once:

*but his blood will I require at the watchman's hands*; he shall be punished for not doing his duty, for not giving the due warning of danger, on which account the man was surprised with the enemy, and taken away unawares; and therefore his death shall be laid to the watchman, and he must be answerable for it.

**Ver. 7.** *So thou, O son of man*, &c.] Here begins the application of the parable to the prophet himself, describing his office and his duty:

*I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel*; which is repeated from (<sup><3187></sup>Ezekiel 3:17), (See Gill on "<sup><3187></sup>Ezekiel 3:17"). The Targum is,

“I have appointed thee a teacher;”

a spiritual watchman; so pastors, teachers, ministers of the Gospel, are watchmen, (<sup><3046></sup>2 Timothy 4:5 <sup><3137></sup>Hebrews 13:17):

*therefore thou shalt hear the word from my mouth, and warn them from me.* The Targum is,

“thou shalt receive the word from my Word, and warn them from sinning before me.”

**Ver. 8.** *When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, &c.]* Order the prophet to say so to him, and as follows; (see Gill on “<sup><3188></sup>Ezekiel 3:18”).

**Ver. 9.** *Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way, &c.]* (See Gill on “<sup><3189></sup>Ezekiel 3:19”).

**Ver. 10.** *Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, &c.]* Such of them as were with him in the captivity: thus ye speak, saying; reasoning and arguing within and among themselves; which the Lord heard, and made known to the prophet, who is bid to repeat it to them in order to give an answer:

*if our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them;* as the prophet said they should, (<sup><3223></sup>Ezekiel 24:23), with which he had concluded his prophecies to them; and now they take it up, and argue against themselves, and against him; if our sins and transgressions are laid upon us, and we must answer for them; if the guilt of them is charged on us, and they are unexpiated and unatoned for; and the punishment of them is, or will be, inflicted on us, and we do, and must pine away, and be consumed in them, and by them:

*how should we then live?* as thou promisest us upon repentance; it is all over with us; there is no hope for us; what signify our repentance, or thy promises of life unto us? these things can never hang together, that we should live, and yet pine away in our sins; so that these are the words of persons both despairing, and making the prophet to say things opposite and contradictory, and which would not admit of a reconciliation; (see <sup><3571></sup>Ezekiel 37:11).

**Ver. 11.** *Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord, &c.]* The following is the answer returned from the Lord by the prophet to their above complaint and reasoning; to which is premised the oath of God, showing the certainty, reality, and sincerity of what is said, which might be depended on as true:

*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, &c.* (See Gill on “<sup>21823</sup>Ezekiel 18:23”), (See Gill on “<sup>21831</sup>Ezekiel 18:31”), (See Gill on “<sup>21832</sup>Ezekiel 18:32”):

**Ver. 12.** *Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, &c.*] (See Gill on “<sup>23812</sup>Ezekiel 33:2”). The purport of what the prophet is bid to say in this and some following verses is, that the righteousness of a man that trusts in it, he sinning and not repenting, shall not save him; and that the wickedness of a repenting sinner shall not damn him:

*the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression*; this must be understood, not of a truly righteous man, or of the righteousness of Christ, by which such an one is made so; for that righteousness does deliver those to whom it is imputed, from sin and the condemnation of it, even in the day of his transgression, which is every day of his life; for there is not a just man that does good, and sinneth not; and in the day when his sin is shown him, and he is convinced of it, this removes the guilt of it; and in the day it will be sought for, or he may be charged with it, and when the sins of others will be brought to an account, the righteousness by which he is justified will deliver him from avenging justice; from the curse of the law; from the wrath of God; from eternal death, and everlasting damnation; but this is to be interpreted of one that is not truly righteous, and of a man’s own righteousness; and which he trusts to, as is afterwards expressed; and may and does turn from: this can never deliver a man in the day of his transgression from the guilt and condemnation of it; for a man’s own righteousness is but what he ought to do; and, was it ever so perfect, yet, should he commit one single sin, it would not justify him from it, or deliver him from the curse of the law and wrath of God due unto it:

*as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness*; when he is truly convinced of his sin, and the evil of it; is heartily sorry for it, after a godly sort; ingenuously confesses it, and departs from it; applies to Christ, to his blood and righteousness, for pardon and acceptance; though his wickedness has been ever so great, or attended with ever such aggravating circumstances, yet it shall not damn him; or he shall not fall by it into hell and everlasting perdition; but shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation:

*neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth*; he cannot live by it, nor for it; as it cannot justify him, it

cannot save him, or bring him to heaven, or entitle him to eternal life; he is not able to live comfortably now; when his sin is charged upon him, his righteousness will not relieve him; and much less will he be able to live happily hereafter; he must and will die in his sins, being found in them, for anything his own righteousness can do for him: this is the same with the former clause, and is repeated in different words for the confirmation of it; self-righteous persons not being easily convinced of the truth of these things.

**Ver. 13.** *When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live, &c.]* A happy life, here and hereafter; an eternal life, and not die the second death: this must be understood, should he appear a truly righteous person; one that does not trust to his own righteousness, but to the righteousness of Christ, and lives by faith on that; looking for the hope of righteousness through it, and behaving agreeably to his character:

*but if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity;* as he will by trusting to it; if he trusts to it for acceptance with God, and justification in his sight, and thinks himself proof against all temptation to sin on account of it; and that he has righteousness enough to make amends for sins committed, or for other sins he may commit; and which he may venture upon through this false notion, and so be led on to an open course of sinning, and series of committing iniquity:

*all his righteousness shall not be remembered;* God will take no notice of it; it shall be of no avail to justify him from sin, and secure him from wrath; it will be as if it never had been:

*but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it;* an eternal death, which is the just wages of sin; from which a man's own righteousness can never deliver him, though the righteousness of Christ does deliver from it; (see ~~2ND~~ Proverbs 10:2 11:4).

**Ver. 14.** *Again, when I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, &c.]* That is, provided he continues in the same course of life, impenitent and unbelieving:

*but if he turn from his sin;* repent of it, and forsake it:

*and do that which is lawful and right;* or "judgment and justice"; do that which is agreeably to the law of God, and what is right between man and man; lives soberly, righteously, and godly, as well as denies ungodliness

and worldly lusts; whereby it appears that his repentance is genuine and true.

**Ver. 15.** *If the wicked restore the pledge, &c.*] His neighbour's raiment, which he has taken as a pledge for money lent him; and which, according to the law, was to be restored before sunset, (<sup><0226></sup>Exodus 22:26,27) which wicked men did not attend unto; but when such a man is brought to a sense of his wickedness, and repentance for it, as an evidence of it he would restore the pledge:

*and give again that he had robbed;* to him whom he had robbed; as a thief was obliged to do, four or five fold, according to the law, (<sup><0221></sup>Exodus 22:1), and which, when a man did voluntarily, from the convictions of his own mind, and not by force of the civil magistrate, it was a sign of true repentance; (see <sup><0218></sup>Luke 19:8):

*and walk in the statutes of life;* the rule of life and conversation, and to the keeping of which the promise of long life is annexed; and which preserve persons from dying a shameful death by the hand of the civil magistrate; statutes, which, if a man do, he shall live in them; see (<sup><0211></sup>Ezekiel 20:11):

*without committing iniquity;* not living entirely without sin, which the best of men do not; but without committing grosser sins, as before; and without making a trade of sinning, and living in it:

*he shall surely live, he shall not die;* he shall live comfortably now, and happily hereafter; he shall live a spiritual life, and not die the second death.

**Ver. 16.** *None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him, &c.*] Imputed to him; placed to his account; charged upon him, or ever be spoke of to him, either now, or at the day of judgment, by way of accusation and complaint, or to his condemnation:

*he hath done that which is lawful and right;* has repented of his sin; looked to Christ by faith for the pardon of it; and laid hold on his righteousness for his justification; and being influenced and assisted by the grace of God, has done that which is right and good in the sight of God and man:

*he shall surely live;* he now lives a life of faith and holiness; he shall continue to live, and persevere to the end, and inherit eternal life; (see <sup><0221></sup>Ezekiel 18:21, 22).

**Ver. 17.** *Yet the children of thy people say, &c.*] “Not my people”; for surely the children of God could never say what follows; and one would think that even no man could say it, after so much had been said by the Lord concerning the righteous and the wicked, and his dealings with them, which must appear to be just and right, good and gracious; and yet such were the atheism, the perverseness and peevishness of these people, they went on to say as they had done before:

*the way of the Lord is not equal:* is not according to the rules of justice and equity. The Targum is,

“the ways of the goodness of the Lord are not made plain (or exposed) unto us.”

The answer to which is,

*but, as for them, their way is not equal;* according to the rule of the divine word; as for God, his way and methods, both of providence and grace, were right and good; (see Gill on “<sup>261825</sup>Ezekiel 18:25”).

**Ver. 18.** *When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, &c.*] This and what is said in the following verse are clear instances of the equality, justness, and goodness of the ways of God; and are again repeated, if possible, to make it clear and plain to them that their charge and complaint were groundless; (see Gill on “<sup>261824</sup>Ezekiel 18:24, 26”).

**Ver. 19.** *But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, &c.*] (see Gill on “<sup>261827</sup>Ezekiel 18:27”).

**Ver. 20.** *Yet ye say, the way of the Lord is not equal, &c.*] Still obstinately persisting in their false charges, notwithstanding plain proofs to the contrary:

*O ye house of Israel, I will judge you everyone after his ways;* (see Gill on “<sup>261830</sup>Ezekiel 18:30”).

**Ver. 21.** *And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, &c.*] Of Jeconiah’s captivity, when Ezekiel with others were carried into Babylon; (see <sup>261802</sup>Ezekiel 1:2)

*in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month;* which was a year, four months, and some days, after the city of Jerusalem was taken; for that was destroyed in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, and so of the captivity, and in



the fifth month, and tenth day of the month. (<sup>1291D</sup>2 Kings 25:2 <sup>3421D</sup>Jeremiah 52:12). It is much it was not known at Babylon before; though so it might, and yet not one that escaped came to Ezekiel sooner to give him an account of it, which he had seen with his eyes. The Syriac version reads it, in the “eleventh year”; and so makes it but a few months after the destruction; and it may be observed that it is promised by the Lord, (<sup>3205</sup>Ezekiel 24:26), that on the day the city was taken, one should escape, and bring the prophet the news; that is, directly, immediately, in a very short time, as soon as it was possible that he could arrive to him; and yet, as taken notice, here were a year and almost five months before he reached him, which seems pretty strange. The difficulty may be solved in this manner: Ezekiel reckons from the captivity of Jeconiah, which began in the month Chisleu; and the computation in (<sup>1291D</sup>2 Kings 25:2 <sup>3421D</sup>Jeremiah 52:12), is from Zedekiah’s reign, which is to be reckoned from the month Nisan, and from the first Nisan of his reign; for it is a rule with the Jews, <sup>f580</sup> that the beginning of the year for kings is the first of Nisan; so that the tenth month from the captivity is the sixth from Nisan; whence it appears there was not a full month from the city being burnt to the news being brought to Ezekiel; which was time short enough, in such a troublesome season, to take a journey from Jerusalem to Babylon; for Zedekiah not being crowned before the Nisan following the captivity, the computation of his reign did not begin till that Nisan, which makes this difference in the chronology. According to Bishop Usher <sup>f581</sup>, this messenger came to Ezekiel the twenty fifth of January, the fourth day of the week (Wednesday), in 3417 A.M. or before Christ 587:

*that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me*; as it was foretold and promised he should, (<sup>3205</sup>Ezekiel 24:26):

*saying, the city is smitten*; the city of Jerusalem; the walls were broken down, the houses burnt, and the whole destroyed.

**Ver. 22.** *Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came*, &c.] The prophet felt a divine impulse on his mind; he was under the influence of a spirit of prophecy, and knew before the messenger came to him what his message was, and was prepared to receive it, and to prophesy upon it; for this is to be understood of prophecy, as the Targum,

“prophecy from before the Lord was with me in the evening <sup>f582</sup>,”

(see <sup><2181></sup>Isaiah 8:11):

*and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning*; the hand of the Lord, or the power of the Lord, had done it, as he promised he would, (<sup><3187></sup>Ezekiel 3:27) so that he spoke freely and boldly, and continued to do so from the evening, to the time the messenger came to him in the morning, to all those that were with him:

*and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb*: as he had been for three years past; for though he had been prophesying against several nations, yet these prophecies were not delivered, it is very likely, by word of mouth, but by writing, and sent into those countries by proper messengers; but now the prophet's mouth is opened by the Spirit of God, as it was said it should, when this messenger should come to him, (<sup><3247></sup>Ezekiel 24:27) and from this time he was not silent, but prophesied to his people, the Jews, verbally, as he was bid to do by the Lord.

**Ver. 23.** *Then the word of the Lord came unto me, &c.*] After the messenger had delivered his message, and he had received it, and conversed with him about it:

*saying*: as follows:

**Ver. 24.** *Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel, &c.*] The places which were laid waste by Nebuchadnezzar's army, going and returning, in and about Jerusalem, and in several parts of Judea; these were they that were left in the land after the destruction, to people and plant it; or who, having fled to distant parts, were now returned, and took possession of it, though it was in a wretched condition, a mere waste or desert; and yet they were lifted up with it, and proud and haughty, as their language shows: for thus they speak,

*saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land*; he was but one, and had no child, when the promise of inheriting the land was made unto him; and he was but a single worshipper of God, and yet he had this favour and privilege:

*but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance*: so they oppose themselves to Abraham, and argue from the lesser to the greater; that if a single person was vouchsafed to inherit it, then much more many, and those of his seed; and to whom the land was particularly given for an inheritance, and who were now in the possession of it, as Abraham never

was; and, being many, were able to defend their right, and secure themselves in the enjoyment of it; all which reasoning shows their pride and vanity, though they were under such humbling circumstances; their land being waste, their numbers lessened, and the enemy had but just left it, having made dreadful devastations in it; and which had had no influence upon them to reform them, or bring them to repentance, as the following verses show.

**Ver. 25.** *Wherefore say unto them, thus saith the Lord God, &c.*] Send them this message in writing, as from the Lord; for the prophet was now in Chaldea, and could not deliver it by word of mouth to those that inhabited the wastes of Israel; but he could tell it to the messenger that came to him, who had escaped from Jerusalem; or send it by him, or some other:

*ye eat with the blood*; or rather “upon”, or “by” the “blood”<sup>f583</sup>; contrary to the law in (<sup>(-B926)</sup>Leviticus 19:26) which is a different law from that in (<sup>(-0094)</sup>Genesis 9:4), and from that in (<sup>(-0887)</sup>Leviticus 3:17 7:26,27) and refers to an idolatrous practice of the Heathens, which these Jews imitated; who, having slain and offered their sacrifices to devils, sat down round about the blood of them, and ate their food or part of their sacrifice by it, as Kimchi on the text observes. The account Maimonides<sup>f584</sup> gives of the Zabians is this,

“you must know (says he) that the blood is reckoned very unclean and impure by the Zabians, yet is eaten by them, because they think it is the food of devils; and that he that eats it by this means obtains some communications with them; so that they converse familiarly with him, and reveal things future to him, which the vulgar commonly attribute to devils: notwithstanding there were some among them, with whom it seemed very grievous and difficult to eat blood (for it is a thing which the nature of man abhors); these used to slay some beast, and take its blood, and put it in a vessel, or in a hole dug in the earth, and eat the slain beast, sitting in a circle about the blood; imagining to themselves, in so doing, while they ate the flesh the devils ate the blood, and that this is their food; and by this means friendship, fraternity, and familiarity were contracted between them, because they all ate at one table, and sat on one seat; besides, they were of opinion that the devils appeared to them in dreams, and told them things to come, and were of much advantage to them;”

and accordingly it follows:

*and lift up your eyes towards your idols*; make your devotion, and pray unto them, and worship them, and expect help and assistance from them:

*and shed blood*; innocent blood, as the Targum; they were guilty of murder as well as of idolatry, or shedding of blood, in sacrifice to idols:

*and shall ye possess the land?* can such wretches as you, such gross idolaters and murderers, ever think that you are the children of Abraham, and have a right to the inheritance of this land, or shall long continue in the possession of it, living in such abominable iniquities as these?

**Ver. 26** *Ye stand upon your sword*, &c.] You trust in it, and think to support yourselves by it, and secure your possession and right of it by that means. So the Targum,

“you stand in your strength:”

*ye work abomination*; that which is abominable to God, and not fit to be named among men; Jarchi interprets it of sodomy: the word is in the feminine gender, and may be rendered, “ye women work abomination”; referring to that unnatural lust the apostle speaks of, (<sup>4013</sup>Romans 1:26) so Ben Melech:

*and ye defile everyone his neighbour's wife*; were guilty of adultery; and which was so common, that scarce any were free from it, and therefore is charged upon the whole body of them:

*and shall ye possess the land?* such vile creatures as these, guilty of the abominations for which the land formerly spewed out its ancient inhabitants, the Canaanites? and the present possessors might expect the same, as being very unworthy inheritors of it, whatever high thoughts they might have of themselves.

**Ver. 27.** *Say thou thus unto them, thus saith the Lord God*, &c.] Send or write unto them in the name of the Lord, after this manner,

*as I live*, which is the form of an oath; the Lord swears by himself his life, because he could swear by no greater, and for the confirmation of what follows:

*surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword*; by their own sword, falling out one with another; or by the sword of Ishmael

(~~2411D~~ Jeremiah 41:2,3) or by the sword of the Chaldeans, who revenged the death of Gedaliah and others; even such who dwelt amidst the ruins of the city of Jerusalem, and other places, that were become desolate through the ravages of the enemy:

*and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured*; of which it may be supposed there were the greater numbers, since the land was so depopulated: and they that be in the forts, and in the caves, shall die of the pestilence; such as were in fortified cities, or in caverns of the earth, dug in rocks and mountains, where, in neither of them, men and beasts could easily come at them; here the Lord would send his arrow, the plague, that flies by day, and reach them, and destroy them; none can escape his hands; these are three of the Lord's sore judgments, the sword, pestilence, and noisome beasts.

**Ver. 28.** *For I will lay the land most desolate*, &c.] Or, "desolation" and "desolation"<sup>f585</sup>; one desolating judgment shall follow upon another, until it is completely desolate; it was very desolate already, through the ravages of the Chaldean army; but it should become more so, through other judgments here threatened them:

*and the pomp of her strength shall cease*; some understand this of the temple, which was the most pompous building in the land, and in which they placed their strength and confidence: but this was destroyed already: it is rather to be interpreted of whatsoever riches, power, and glory, were yet remaining, which should be removed:

*and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate*; which used to abound with vines and olives, with flocks and pastures:

*that none shall pass through*; not only there should be no inhabitant, but no traveller in it, or very few, because of the sword in one part, the pestilence in another, and wild beasts in other places, and a general barrenness and unfruitfulness; so that a traveller would be both in great danger, and in want of provisions to supply himself and cattle.

**Ver. 29.** *Then shall they know that I am the Lord*, &c.] An omniscient Being, that could foresee and foretell what would come to pass; and omnipotent, able to do whatever he pleased, and true and faithful to his word; and a sovereign Lord, whose will cannot be resisted; this they should see, own, and acknowledge:

*when I have laid the land most desolate, because of all their abominations which they have committed:* for though he is a sovereign Lord, yet he does not execute his judgments in an arbitrary way, merely cause it is his will, but because of the abominable sins committed by men, which provoke the eyes of his glory.

**Ver. 30.** *Also, thou son of man,* &c.] I have something to say to thee, and inform thee of, not only concerning the Jews in Judea, what they say, and what will befall them; but concerning those that are with thee, and what they say of thee, and what will be the issue of it:

*the children of thy people still are talking against thee;* not the Lord's people, but his own people, which was the more cutting to him to hear of, and the more ungrateful in them; though indeed they were but children, who acted a weak part, and the less to be regarded; these spake against the prophet: they could not say he was no prophet, he had his credentials and commission from the Lord, which were well known, and many of his prophecies had been fulfilled; they could not speak against his doctrine, which was of God; nor against his conversation, which was agreeable to his character and office; but they said some things in a ludicrous and jocose manner, in a slighting and contemptuous way, as showed they had little reverence and respect for him, and were careless and indifferent about hearing him; at least had little regard to this matter, or the subject of his ministry, which they had no great value for: and this they did still; they had been long at it; it was their common talk and constant business, though the prophet knew nothing of it, and thought they had the greatest respect for him, speaking fair to his face, and behaving with decency towards him; but the Lord knew it, and resented it, and informs him of it: and this they did continually, from time to time,

*by the walls, and in the doors of the houses;* privately and secretly; "by the walls", where they used to get together and sun themselves, and pass away their time, by talking against the prophet; and, when they did, would place themselves against the walls, that nobody might overhear them; and they would sometimes stand in the porches of their houses, and, as their neighbours and acquaintance passed by, would call them in, and hold a chat about the prophet; and jeer and laugh at him, and what he had said: and speak one to another,

*every man to his brother, saying, come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord;* let us go and amuse ourselves for

an hour or two with what the prophet says; perhaps we shall hear some new thing, which may be pleasing and diverting: for, not their spiritual profit did they seek, but to have their ears tickled, and their fancies pleased.

**Ver. 31.** *And they come unto thee as the people cometh,* &c.] As the people of God, who came to the prophets's house to hear him preach the word, and explain it for their spiritual profit and edification these came when they did, and as early and constantly, and with seeming pleasure:

*and they sit before thee as my people;* with great decency and reverence, and very gravely and demurely, and with seeming devotion, and stay the time out till the whole service is over; as scholars sit at the feet of their masters, to hear and learn their doctrines. So the Targum,

“and they come unto thee as the men the disciples come:”

*and they hear thy words, but they will not do them;* they gave him the hearing, and seemed attentive, but did not understand what they heard, at least did not put it in practice; they were only hearers, and not doers of the word, and like to the foolish man in (<sup><407b></sup>Matthew 7:26,27):

*for with their mouth they show much love:* by the motions of their lips while hearing, and other gestures, as well as by what they said afterwards, they seemed pleased and delighted with what they heard; made huge encomiums upon it, and spoke much in the praise of the preacher. The Targum is the reverse,

“they made game with their mouth.”

But their heart goeth after their covetousness;

“after the money they had taken away by force,”

as the Targum; after the world, and the things of it; after their secular affairs, so that they wished the sermon over, that they might be at them; or, however, did not so diligently attend to what was said, but the cares of the world choked the word, and made it unfruitful to them; these were like the seed that fell among thorns, the thorny ground hearers, (<sup><403c></sup>Matthew 13:22 <sup><408f></sup>Amos 8:5).

**Ver. 32.** *And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice,* &c.] Whose voice, and the music of it, are regarded, and not the matter of the song, but the manner in which it is sung; so these

people did not so much attend to what the prophet said as the manner of his delivery; they were delighted with the harmony of his voice, the eloquence of his speech, the propriety of his expressions, the eloquence and aptness of his diction, and the cadency of his words, and not with the excellent doctrines he delivered; they were affected and pleased no otherwise than if they had been at a concert of music; or had been entertained by one that understood not only vocal music, but could “play well on an instrument” at the same time, and make both agree together; which yields much pleasure to lovers of music. The Gospel is a lovely song indeed; “a song of loves”<sup>f586</sup>, as it may be rendered; of the love of God, and of the love of Christ; and the voice of a Gospel minister is a pleasant charming voice to those that understand it, but to others it is a voice, and nothing else; they may be delighted with his accents, but not with his matter: for they hear thy words, but they do them not; which is repeated, that it might be observed.

**Ver. 33.** *And when this cometh to pass*, &c.] The prophecy before delivered out, concerning the desolations in the land of Israel, by the sword, pestilence, and wild beasts:

*lo, it will come*; whatever is predicted by the Lord; in the mouth of his prophets, certainly comes to pass: then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them; and acknowledge it; and particularly that Ezekiel was one, a true prophet of the Lord, by the exact accomplishment of his predictions.