

# CHAPTER 40

## INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 40

This chapter treats of the comforts of God's people; of the forerunner and coming of the Messiah; of his work, and the dignity of his person; of the folly of making idols, and of the groundless complaints of the church of God. The consolations of God's people, by whom to be administered, and the matter, ground, and reason of them, (<sup>230B</sup>Isaiah 40:1,2). John the Baptist, the harbinger of Christ, is described by his work and office, and the effects of it; it issuing in the humiliation of some, and the exaltation of others, and in the revelation of the glory of Christ, (<sup>230B</sup>Isaiah 40:3-5), then follows an order to every minister of the Gospel what he should preach and publish; the weakness and insufficiency of men to anything that is spiritually good; their fading and withering goodliness, which is to be ascribed to the blowing of the Spirit of God upon it; and the firmness and constancy of the word of God is declared, (<sup>230B</sup>Isaiah 40:6-8), next the apostles of Christ in Jerusalem are particularly exhorted to publish fervently and openly the good tidings of the Gospel; to proclaim the coming of Christ, the manner of it, and the work he came about; and to signify his faithful discharge of his office as a shepherd, (<sup>230B</sup>Isaiah 40:9-11), the dignity of whose person is set forth by his almighty power, by his infinite wisdom, and by the greatness of his majesty, in comparison of which all nations and things are as nothing, (<sup>230B</sup>Isaiah 40:12-17) and then the vanity of framing any likeness to God, and of forming idols for worship, is observed, (<sup>230B</sup>Isaiah 40:18-25), and from the consideration of the divine power in creation and upholding all things, the church of God is encouraged to expect renewed strength and persevering grace, and is blamed for giving way to a distrustful and murmuring spirit, (<sup>230B</sup>Isaiah 40:26-31).

**Ver. 1.** *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.*] The Babylonish captivity being predicted in the preceding chapter, for the comfort of God's people a deliverance is promised, expressed in such terms, as in the clearest and strongest manner to set forth the redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ, of which it was typical. Here begins the more

evangelical and spiritual part of this prophecy, which reaches to and includes the whole Gospel dispensation, from the coming of John the Baptist to the second coming of Christ. It begins with comforts, and holds on and ends with them; which consolations, Kimchi observes, are what should be in the times of the Messiah; and the word “comfort” is repeated, he says, to confirm the thing. It is God that here speaks, who is the God of all comfort; the persons whom he would have comforted are his “people”, whom he has chosen, with whom he has made a covenant in Christ, whom he has given to him, and he has redeemed by his blood, and whom he effectually calls by his grace; these are sometimes disconsolate, by reason of the corruptions of their nature, the temptations of Satan, the hidings of God’s face, and the various afflictions they meet with; and it is the will of God they should be comforted, as appears by sending his Son to be the comforter of them, by giving his Spirit as another comforter, by appointing ordinances as breasts of consolation to them, by the promises he has made to them, and the confirmation of them by an oath, for their strong consolation; and particularly by the word of the Gospel, and the ministers of it, who are Barnabases, sons of consolation, who are sent with a comfortable message, and are encouraged in their work from the consideration of God being their God, who will be with them, assist them, and make their ministrations successful; and to these are these words addressed; which are repeated, not to suggest any backwardness in Gospel ministers, who are ready to go on such an errand, however reluctant they may be to carry bad tidings; but rather to signify the people’s refusal to be comforted, and therefore must be spoken to again and again; and also to show the vehement and hearty desire of the Lord to have them comforted. The Targum is,

“O ye prophets, prophesy comforts concerning my people.”

And the Septuagint and Arabic versions insert, “O ye priests”, as if the words were directed to them. The preachers of the Gospel are meant, and are called unto; what the Lord would have said for the comfort of his people by them is expressed in the following verse.

**Ver. 2.** *Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, &c.*] Or, “speak to or according to the heart of Jerusalem<sup>f760</sup>”; to her very heart, what will be a cordial to her, very acceptable, grateful, and comfortable; and let it be proclaimed aloud, that she may hear and understand it. By

“Jerusalem” is meant the Gospel church, and the true members of it. Aben Ezra interprets it of the congregation of Israel; (see <sup><8122></sup>Hebrews 12:22):

*that her warfare is accomplished*; this life is a warfare; saints have many enemies to engage with, sin, Satan, and the world; many battles to fight, a great fight of afflictions, and the good fight of faith: this is “accomplished”, or “filled up”<sup>f761</sup>”; not that it is at an end before this life is, while that lasts there will be a continual conflict; yet all enemies are now conquered by Christ, and in a short time will be under the feet of his people; the Captain of their salvation, who has got the victory, is gone before them; the crown is laid up for them, and is sure unto them. Some interpret it, as Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Ben Melech, “her set or appointed time”<sup>f762</sup>”; and compare it with (<sup><8108></sup>Job 7:1), and may be understood either of the time of deliverance from captivity: so the Targum,

“that her captivity by the people is filled up:”

or of the time of the Messiah’s coming, the fulness of time, when he should appear, afterwards prophesied of; or of the servitude and bondage of the law being at an end, and of all the fatigue, labour, and trouble of that dispensation; and of the Gospel dispensation taking place: it follows,

*that her iniquity is pardoned*; which is God’s act, flows from his free grace, is obtained by the blood of Christ, is full and complete, and yields great relief and comfort to guilty minds: or “is accepted”<sup>f763</sup>”; that is, the punishment of it as bore by her surety; (see <sup><8368></sup>Leviticus 26:43). The allusion is to the sacrifices being accepted for the atonement of sin, (<sup><8108></sup>Leviticus 1:4), and may have respect here to the acceptation of Christ’s sacrifice, for the expiation of the sins of his people. Jarchi interprets the word “appeased”; and so it may be applied to the reconciliation for sin made by the blood of Christ. The Targum understands it of forgiveness, as we do:

*for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins*; which may be understood either of a sufficiency of chastisements for sin; though they are not more, but less, than are deserved, yet are as much as their heavenly Father, in his great tenderness and compassion, thinks are enough; and though they are in measure, and do not exceed, yet are in large measure often, at least in their own apprehension: or else of the large and copious blessings of grace and goodness received, instead of punishment for sins, that might be expected: or rather at the complete

satisfaction made by Christ for her sins, and of her receiving at the Lord's hands, in her surety, full punishment for them; not that more was required than was due, but that ample satisfaction was made, and, being infinite, fully answers the demerit of sin; and this being in the room and stead of God's people, clears them, and yields comfort to them.

**Ver. 3.** *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, &c.*] Not the voice of the Holy Ghost, as Jarchi; but of John the Baptist, as is attested by all the evangelists, (~~408B~~ Matthew 3:3 ~~408C~~ Mark 1:3 ~~408E~~ Luke 3:1,5,6) and by John himself, (~~402B~~ John 1:23), who was a "voice" not like the man's nightingale, "vox et praeterea nihil" a voice and nothing else; he had not only a sonorous, but an instructive teaching voice; he had the voice of a prophet, for he was a prophet: we read of the voices of the prophets, their doctrines and prophecies, (~~4137~~ Acts 13:27), his voice was the voice of one that crieth, that published and proclaimed aloud, openly and publicly, with great eagerness and fervency, with much freedom and liberty, what he had to say; and this was done "in the wilderness", in the wilderness of Judea, literally taken, (~~408E~~ Matthew 3:1), and when Judea was become a Roman province, and the Jews were brought into the wilderness of the people, (~~318B~~ Ezekiel 20:35) and when they were, as to their religious affairs, in a very forlorn and wilderness condition<sup>f764</sup>: what John was to say, when he came as a harbinger of Christ, and did, follows:

*prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God:* by whom is meant the Messiah to whose proper deity a noble testimony is here bore, being called "Jehovah" and "our God": whose way John prepared himself, by preaching the doctrine of repentance, administering the ordinance of baptism, pointing at the Messiah, and exhorting the people to believe in him; and he called upon them likewise to prepare the way, and make a plain path to meet him in, by repenting of their sins, amending their ways, and cordially embracing him when come, laying aside all those sentiments which were contrary to him, his Gospel, and kingdom. The sense of this text is sadly perverted by the Targum, and seems to be, done on purpose, thus,

"prepare the way before the people of the Lord, cast up ways before the congregation of our God;"

whereas it is before the Lord himself. The allusion is to pioneers, sent before some great personage to remove all obstructions out of his way, to

cut down trees, level the way, and clear all before him, as in the following verse.

**Ver. 4.** *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low,* &c.] Which is not to be understood literally, but, as Kimchi says, parabolically and mystically: the meaning is, that in consequence of John's ministry, and our Lord's coming, such who were depressed and bowed down with the guilt of sin, and were low and humble in their own eyes, should be raised up and comforted; and that such who were elated with themselves, and their own righteousness, should be humbled; their pride and haughtiness should be brought down, and they treated with neglect and contempt, while great notice was taken of lowly minded ones; (see ~~Q44~~ Luke 14:11) and (~~Q184~~ Luke 18:14):

*and the crooked shall be straight and the rough places plain;* what before was dark and intricate in prophecy should now become clear; and such doctrines as were not so well understood should now become plain and easy.

**Ver. 5.** *And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.* &c.] Christ himself, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and his own glory, as the glory of the of the only begotten of the Father; the glorious perfections of his nature, seen in the miracles wrought, and in the doctrines taught by him; the glory of the divine Father, in the face or person of Christ; and the glory of his attributes, in the work of salvation by him; all which is most clearly discerned in the glass of the Gospel, or in the ministry of the word, by John, Christ himself, and his apostles:

*and all flesh shall see it together;* not the Jews only, but Gentiles also; not with their bodily eyes, but with the eyes of their understanding; even the salvation of the Lord, and his glory, as displayed in it, being set forth in the everlasting Gospel to the view of all; (see ~~Q187~~ Luke 3:7),

*for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it:* that his glory should be revealed, and be visible to all, and therefore sure and certain; for what he has said he does, and what he has spoken he makes good. The Targum is,

“for by the word of the Lord it is so decreed;”

and therefore shall be fulfilled.

**Ver. 6.** *The voice said, cry, &c.*] Not the same voice as in (<sup><230B></sup>Isaiah 40:3), nor the voice of an angel, as Aben Ezra; but a voice from the Lord, as Jarchi; the voice of prophecy, says Kimchi; it is the Lord's voice to the prophet, or rather to any and every Gospel minister, giving them an order to prophesy and preach, without which they cannot preach regularly and lawfully; it is the same as, "go, teach all nations", &c. preach the Gospel to every creature, &c. (<sup><4B89></sup>Matthew 28:19 <sup><4165></sup>Mark 16:15):

*and he said, what shall I cry?* publish, proclaim, or preach? for a minister of the Gospel is to preach not out of his own heart, or of his own head, or what is of his own devising and framing, but what is agreeable to the mind of Christ, as revealed in his word; he is to speak according to the oracles of God, the proportion and analogy of faith; he is to inquire there, and of Christ, what he shall say. The Targum is,

"the voice of him that saith, prophesy; and he answered and said, what shall I prophesy?"

The reply is,

*all flesh is grass*; declare the frailty and mortality of men; which some think is mentioned, to increase the wonder of Christ's incarnation, after prophesied of, as the forerunner of it is before; that Christ should condescend to take upon him such frail mortal flesh; that he should become flesh, and be manifested in it: or rather this is to be said, to put men in mind and to prepare them to think of another world, and how they shall appear before the judgment seat; seeing, if they have not a better righteousness than their own, and except they are born again, they shall neither see nor enter into the kingdom of heaven; which is one of the first things to be published in the Gospel ministry; as also how weak, impotent, and insufficient, men are, to that which is good, which may be meant by this phrase; being as weak as a spire of grass, not able to do any good actions, much less to fulfil the law, or to regenerate themselves, renew their hearts, or cleanse their natures: and this must be said, to abate the pride of men; to show the necessity of divine power in regeneration; to instruct men to seek for the grace of God, as to convert them, so to help and assist them in all they do; and to direct them to ascribe all they have, and are, to the grace of God; to this purpose the Apostle Peter quotes this passage, (<sup><6023></sup>1 Peter 1:23-25). It may be applied to the ordinances of the legal dispensation, and all the privileges of it, which are said to be carnal; and trusting in them was trusting in the flesh, (<sup><5084></sup>Philippians 3:4,5) (<sup><5090></sup>Hebrews 9:10), these were

weak and insufficient to justify, sanctify, and save, and were not to continue:

*and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field;* all the goodliness and glory of man; all that is excellent and valuable in him, or belonging to him, Or that is thought to be so, his riches, honours, strength, beauty, wisdom, and knowledge; yea, all his seeming holiness and righteousness; which are all fading and perishing, like a gay flower, which appears lovely for a while, and on a sudden falls off, or is cropped, or trampled upon; to which a flower of the field is more liable than that of the garden. This may be applied to the splendour of the legal dispensation, which is done away by a more excellent glory taking place, (<sup><RB></sup>2 Corinthians 3:10,11).

**Ver. 7.** *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, &c.]* And so does man, and all his glory and goodliness:

*because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it:* alluding to some impetuous and blasting wind blowing upon herbs and flowers, to the withering and fading of them; (see <sup><RB></sup>Psalm 103:15,16), legal ordinances ceased upon the pouring forth of the Spirit. The external excellencies of men, or their outward advantages, perish at the breath of God, at the blast of his nostrils, when taken away by death; and at conversion the Spirit of the Lord blows a blast upon all the goodliness of man; the operations of the Spirit are compared to wind, (<sup><RB></sup>John 3:8), which, like that, are free, and, as he pleases, are invisible and imperceptible, land powerful and efficacious, and these cause a withering in men's goodness; the Spirit of God shows that their holiness is not true holiness; that their righteousness has only the appearance of one before men; and their religion and godliness a mere form; and their good works, "splendida peccata", shining sins; that those are insufficient to justify and save, and bring to heaven; upon which they fade away and die in their esteem, who now reckon them but loss and dung, (<sup><RB></sup>Philippians 3:6-8): "surely the people is grass"; the people of the Jews, with all their external advantages; yea, all people, with all the excellencies of human nature, or considered in their best estate, possessed of all that is reckoned good and great, being but mere natural men. The Targum restrains this to the ungodly, as it does the former verse, rendering it,

"as grass the wicked among the people are esteemed;"

as it does the former, thus,

“the wicked are as grass, and their strength as the stubble of the field.”

So Kimchi interprets them of the nations that come with Gog and Magog; and Jarchi of the princes of the kingdoms; but very wrongly, since it is true of all flesh, or of all mankind.

**Ver. 8.** *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, &c.*] Which is repeated, to raise attention to it, as being a matter of importance, and for the confirmation of it:

*but the word of our God shall stand for ever;* the Apostle Peter adds, by way of explanation,

*and this is the word, which by the Gospel is preached unto you;* who seems to distinguish the word from the Gospel, by which it is preached, and to intend Christ the essential Word; who stands or abides for ever as a divine Person; in his office as Mediator, being Prophet, Priest, and King for ever; in the efficacy of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; and in the fulness of his grace: it is true of the written word or Gospel, which remains, is everlasting, and will stand and continue, notwithstanding the persecutions of tyrants, the craft of false teachers, the reproach of ungodly men, and the death of the best of men, even of ministers; though all flesh is grass, fading and withering, the word of God is fresh and lively, firm and durable; and so it is as transcribed into the hearts of men, where it becomes the ingrafted word, and issues in everlasting life. It may be applied to God's word of promise, which is for ever settled in heaven, and is always fulfilled.

**Ver. 9.** *O Zion, that bringest good tidings, &c.*] Or, “O thou that bringest good tidings to Zion<sup>f765</sup>”; which rendering of the words is more agreeable to the latter part of the verse,

*say unto the cities of Judah, &c.* and to some parallel places, (<sup>23417</sup>Isaiah 41:27 52:7) and to the type, the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon; the tidings of which came from Babylon to Zion, or Jerusalem; and to the Targum which paraphrases the words thus,

“O ye prophets, that bring good tidings to Zion;”



and so may be applied to Gospel ministers, who bring the good tidings of the good will, grace, and favour of God, to men, through Christ; of the grace of Christ, in his suretyship engagements and performances; in his incarnation, sufferings, and death, and in his advocacy and intercession; and of the good things that come by him, as peace, pardon, righteousness, salvation, and eternal life:

*get thee up into the high mountain*; to declare these good tidings, in the most open and public manner, that all might hear and receive them, and rejoice at them; it may also point at the place, the church of God, comparable to a high mountain for its visibility and immovableness, where the Gospel is to be published:

*O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings*: the church of God so called, to whom the faith of the Gospel is delivered, which is the pillar and ground of truth; which receives, retains, and maintains it, and sends forth ministers to proclaim it; particularly the first church at Jerusalem, where it was first preached, and from whence it went forth into other parts of Judea, and into all the world; here the apostles of Christ were, and from hence they set out, and published the Gospel all the world over, and who seem to be chiefly meant; for the words may be rendered, as the other clause, “O thou that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem<sup>f766</sup>”; so the Targum: “lift up thy voice with strength”; or preach the Gospel with a strong voice, speak it out; do not mutter it over, or whisper it in a corner; proclaim it on the housetops, cry aloud that all may hear; lift up thy voice like a trumpet; blow the trumpet of the Gospel with all the strength thou hast; cause the joyful sound to be heard far and near:

*lift it up, and be not afraid*; of the reproaches and revilings of men on account of it, or of their persecutions for it; or lest it should not be welcome, or be received as truth:

*say unto the cities of Judah*; the inhabitants of them literally understood, and to the several churches and congregations of the saints everywhere:

*behold your God!* that divine Person is come, that was promised, prophesied of, and expected; even Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature, God manifest in the flesh, God your Saviour, and who being God, truly God, is able to save to the uttermost; look to him with an eye of faith, and be saved; behold the Son of God, the Lamb of God, that has bore your sins, and took them away; behold him now, as your King and your God, on

the throne, made and declared, Lord and Christ, crowned with glory and honour, on the same throne with his divine Father, having all power in heaven and earth; and let the echo of your faith be,

*my Lord and my God.* The Targum is,

“the kingdom of your God is revealed; (see <sup><418D></sup>Matthew 3:2).”

**Ver. 10.** *Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand,* &c.] Some understand this of the second coming of Christ, which coming is certain, such assurances being given of it by promise and prophecy; and will be attended with power, which will be requisite to raise the dead, summon all nations before him, and pass and execute the proper sentence on them; when his arm shall openly bear rule, he will take to himself his great power, and reign; when his reward will be with him, to give to every man according to their works; and his own work will be before him, to judge the world in righteousness: (see <sup><6212></sup>Revelation 22:12), but it is more agreeable to the context, which foretells the coming of John the Baptist, points out the ministers of the Gospel, and describes Christ in his office, as a shepherd feeding his flock, to understand it of his first coming; for not God the Father, but the Son of God, is meant by the Lord God, who is truly God, and so able to save, and which was the end of his coming. He is said to come “with a strong hand”, or with great power, which his work required; which was to fulfil the law, satisfy divine justice, atone for sin, grapple and conflict with innumerable enemies, undergo the death of the cross, bear the curse of the law, and the wrath of God, and all in order to obtain eternal redemption for his people; for this he came from heaven to earth, not by change of place, but by assumption of nature. Some render it, “against a strong one”<sup>f767</sup>; the strong man armed, the devil, whose head he came to break, whose works he came to destroy, with whom he fought, and whom he conquered and destroyed. Jarchi’s note is,

“against the wicked, to take vengeance on them;”

but Aben Ezra and Kimchi supply the word hand, as we do:

*and his arm shall rule for him;* or he shall have sufficient power of himself to do the work he comes about; his own arm or power wrought salvation for him and for his people; (see <sup><2365></sup>Isaiah 63:5). Some render it, “over him”<sup>f768</sup>; that is, over the strong and mighty one, against whom he came, whom he conquered, subdued, and ruled over:

*behold, his reward is with him*; to give to those that trust in him, as Kimchi; or to those that do his word, as the Targum; that believe in him, embrace his Gospel, and act according to it: or this may respect his own reward, which should follow his work; which he was as sure of as if it was in his hands; namely, his exaltation in his human nature, his glory with his Father, and the enjoyment of his spiritual seed to all eternity:

*and his work before him*; the work of redemption and salvation, which he was called unto, sent to do, and which, being given him, he agreed to do, was very toilsome and laborious, yet he took great delight in it, and has finished it; this is said to be “before him”, being proposed in council, and cut out in covenant for him, was well known unto him, and in his power to effect, and what he could easily do, and did. The Targum understands this of the works of men being before him, for whom he has a reward.

**Ver. 11.** *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd*, &c.] Christ has a flock, a flock of men, a distinct and peculiar people, and it is but one, and that a little one, and yet a beautiful one, though often a flock of slaughter; which is his by his Father’s gift, and his own purchase, and appears manifest in the effectual calling, when he calls them by name; to these he stands in the relation of a shepherd, being so by his Father’s designation and appointment, and his own consent; and a good shepherd he is, as is manifest by his laying down his life for the sheep; and a great one, being Jehovah’s fellow, and the chief shepherd, under whom all others are; yea, he is the one, and only one; and a very careful, compassionate, and faithful one he is; who performs his whole office as a shepherd, not only by providing food for his flock, by leading them into green and good pastures, his church and ordinances; by appointing under shepherds to feed them with the doctrines of the Gospel, the wholesome words of the Lord Jesus; and by feeding them himself, with himself, the bread of life, and hidden manna, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed; but also by protecting them from all their enemies, the roaring and devouring lion, Satan, and wolves in sheep’s clothing, false teachers; and by taking such notice and account of them, as that none of them shall be lost; and by doing all that is expressed (<sup>2346</sup>Ezekiel 34:16), seeking that which was lost; bringing back that which was driven away; binding up that which was broken; and strengthening and healing the sick, as well as watching over them night and day, lest any hurt them:

*he shall gather the lambs with his arm*; the weaklings of the flock; the same with babes and sucklings, newly born souls, weak believers, mean and low in their own eyes, the smoking flax, and bruised reed, the day of small things, the poor of the flock; these he gathers with his arm of power, and by the ministry of the Gospel, both to himself, his person, righteousness, grace and fulness, and to his church, to partake of the word and ordinances of it, and to nearer communion with him in them; he gathers them up into his arms in a way of protection, when liable to fall into the hands of powerful enemies, and to be hurt by them, and in order to carry them, they not being able to go of themselves, as it follows:

*and carry them in his bosom*; which is expressive of very great affection to them, such being greatly loved as are put into the bosom, as Obed by Naomi, the poor man's ewe lamb, and a wife of youth; as also of great nearness to him, being in his bosom must lie near his heart, and are indeed upon it; likewise it denotes the most intimate communion with him, and a being privy to his secrets, as Christ in the bosom of his Father is to his; as well as it implies an enjoyment of rest in him, and safety by him; for what can disturb or hurt such as are in the bosom of Christ?

*and shall gently lead those that are with young*; who have the seed of grace in them, have spiritual principles wrought in their souls, Christ formed in their hearts, are full of desires for him and spiritual things, and carry a burden, that of their sins, under which they groan; these he leads out, and off of themselves to himself, his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, into green pastures, into his Father's presence, and at last to glory; and he leads them on "gently", gradually, step by step, to see their own vileness and sinfulness, to look, go to, lay hold on him, and retain him; he leads them into the truths of the Gospel, and the deep waters of the sanctuary, and proportionably to their strength as they are able to bear, either the doctrines of the Gospel, or the duties of religion, or afflictions and sufferings; (see <sup>0334</sup>Genesis 33:14).

**Ver. 12.** *Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?* &c.]. The following account of the power, wisdom, and all sufficiency of God, and which is to be understood of Christ, is to show that he is equal to the work of redemption and salvation he has engaged in, and was about to come and perform, and that he is able to do it, as well as to execute his office as a shepherd; and also to observe, that though his rich grace and goodness he had condescended to take upon him the work of a saviour,

and the office of a shepherd, yet this was not to be interpreted as if he had lost his dignity and glory as a divine Person, or as if that was in the least diminished; for he was no other than that infinite Being, “who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand”; the waters of the seas, for which he has provided a receptacle, where he has collected and put them together; the dimensions of which are exactly known to him, and the vast confluence of water is no more in his hands than so much water as a man can hold in the hollow of his hand, in his fist, or hand contracted:

*and meted out heaven with the span*; which he has stretched out as a curtain, (<sup>234D</sup>Isaiah 40:22), and the measure of which is but one hand’s breadth with him; and is no more to him than stretching out a carpet or canopy; and as easily measured by him as a piece of cloth is by a man with the span of his hand, or any measuring rule or yard:

*and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure*; the word<sup>f769</sup> used signifies the third part of some larger measure, as of a sextarius, as some; or of an ephah, or bath as others; or of some other measure not known; (See Gill on “<sup>4981B</sup>Psalm 80:5”). The Vulgate Latin version renders it, “with three fingers”; and the sense may be, that the dust of the earth, or the earth itself, which is but dust, is no more with the Lord than so much earth or dust as a man can hold between his thumb and two fingers; and in like manner is the whole earth comprehended by the Lord:

*and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance*; as easily as a man can throw in his goods into a pair of scales, and take the true weight of them, with equal ease did the Lord raise the mountains and the hills in a proper proportion, and has so exactly poised them, as if he had weighed them in a pair of scales; this seems to hint at the use of mountains and hills to be a sort of ballast to the earth, and shows the original formation of them from the beginning. The answer to the above question is, that it was the same divine Person of whom it is said, “behold your God, [and who should] come with a strong hand, [and] feed his flock.”

**Ver. 13.** *Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, &c.*] In the creation of all things, in garnishing the heavens, and moving upon the face of the waters? not anyone, angel or man; there were none with him, nor did he need any to guide and direct him what to do<sup>f770</sup>:

*or being his counsellor, hath taught him?* or, “the man of his counsel<sup>f771</sup>”; there was no other than the Wonderful Counsellor, the Angel of the great council, the essential Word of God, whose spirit is here spoken of.

**Ver. 14.** *With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him,* &c.] This is the same as before, only repeated in other words, the more strongly to deny that any mere creature counselled, taught, and instructed the Spirit of Christ, in the ordering and managing the works of creation:

*and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?* or gave him that judgment, knowledge, and understanding in framing the world, and all things in it, in that beautiful and regular manner that it is; which shows it to be a work of wisdom, more than human or angelical, and to be purely divine; no one, angel or man, could have struck out such a path of judgment, such a way of understanding, or showed such exquisite skill and knowledge, as appear in the works of creation; (see ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 104:24).

**Ver. 15.** *Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket,* &c.] Not only the Chaldeans and Babylonians, and other nations most known, and most troublesome to the Jews, but all the nations of the world; these, in comparison of God, of his infinite and immense Being, are but as a drop of water that hangs upon the bucket, or falls from it, when water is drawn by it, or is left in it, when poured out of it; which is nothing in comparison of the well out of which the water is drawn, or even of the water in the bucket drawn out of it:

*and are accounted as the small dust of the balance;* that is, they are accounted nothing of with God, comparatively speaking, any more than the small dust which hangs upon the balance, and gives it no weight, nor turn one way or another, and so is of no consideration. The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, render it, “as the turn of the scale”; and so the Targum; but the other version more strongly expresses the sense:

*behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing;* by which are meant not merely islands, properly so called, which are encompassed by the sea, but all such countries which the Jews used to go to by sea, for all such they called isles; these the Lord can take up, or cast away<sup>f772</sup>, as some render the word; toss them about, overturn and destroy, as a man may take up the most minute thing and cast it from him. The Targum renders it,

“as chaff which flies away;”

or, as others translate it,

“as the ashes of a coal which fly away.”

The word may signify any light thing, as chaff, straw, stubble, feathers, down of thistles, which are easily carried away with the least force; and so Vitranga renders the words, “behold, the isles are as some little thing which flies away”.

**Ver. 16.** *And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, &c.]* The trees of it, as the Targum; these are not sufficient to burn a sacrifice with, suitable to the dignity and majesty of God, and as his justice can require for offences committed:

*nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering,* though it was a mountain and forest which abounded with trees, and especially cedars, and there was a great quantity of cattle in it, yet neither were sufficient to furnish out a proper burnt offering to the Lord; he only himself could provide a Lamb sufficient for a burnt offering, and he has done it, the only begotten Son of God; he has offered himself an offering and a sacrifice to God, of a sweet smelling savour, by which he has put away sin, and made full atonement for it, Jarchi thinks this is said to aggravate the sins of men, of the wicked, which were so great, that Lebanon with all its wood and cattle could not furnish out a sacrifice sufficient to expiate them.

**Ver. 17.** *All nations before him are as nothing, &c.]* As if they were nonentities, and were not real beings in comparison of him, who is the Being of beings, the author of all beings which exist in all nations; who are all in his sight, and are not only as grasshoppers, as is after mentioned, but even as nothing:

*and they are counted to him as less than nothing, and vanity;* if there is or could be such a thing less than nothing, that they are; and so they are accounted of by him; they are like the chaos out of which the earth was formed, when it was “tohu” and “bohu”, the first of which words is used here; this serves to humble the pride of men, and to lessen the glory of the nations, and the inhabitants of them.

**Ver. 18.** *To whom then will ye liken God? &c.]* There is nothing in the whole creation that can bear any resemblance to him, or he to them; since all nations are as a drop of the bucket, as the small dust of the balance, as nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity: “or what likeness will ye

compare unto him”,<sup>f773</sup> order, ordain, and appoint for him? in what rank can he be placed? to what class of beings can he be likened? what similitude can be given of him? what is there that is fit to be named with him, or compared to him? this, with what follows, is mentioned as an antidote to prevent the Jews falling into idolatry in Babylon, where they would be exposed unto it; or rather to prevent Christians in Gospel times from going into the idolatry of the Papists; (see ~~4173~~ Acts 17:28,29 ~~6820~~ Revelation 19:20,21).

**Ver. 19.** *The workman melteth a graven image*, &c.] Or, “the founder”; he melts some sort of metal, as iron, brass, copper, or lead, which he casts into a mould for an image, and afterwards graves, or gets it graved:

*and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold*; or, “the finer”; he stretches out plates of gold, and covers it with them, so that it looks as if it was made of solid gold, and deceives the eyes of men; such stupidity and vanity are there in mortals to believe that there can be deity in such a piece of workmanship!

*and casteth silver chains to put about the graven image*, either for ornament, or rather to fasten it to some wall or pillar, that it may stand upright, and may not be taken down and stole away, or blown down with the wind, or fall of itself and be broken; thus ridiculing the weakness of these idols, and the folly of the makers and worshippers of them. The Targum is,

“the silversmith joins silver chains to it.”

**Ver. 20.** *He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation*, &c.] Who is so poor that he cannot bring an offering to his God, yet he will have one; and though he cannot purchase a golden or silver one, or one that is gilt, and adorned with either; yet he will have a wooden one, as follows. Some render it, “he that is set over the oblation”, which Aben Ezra mentions; that was over the treasury, where the oblations were; the Heathen priest, whose business it was from thence to procure idols to worship. Jerom takes the word <sup>^</sup>k<sub>sm</sub> to be the name of a tree that will not rot; and so the Targum renders it,

“he cuts down an ash:”



but the word is descriptive of an idol worshipper; and, according to Gussetius<sup>f774</sup>, signifies one that by custom and repeated acts has got skill in such things; and so Jarchi: hence

*he chooseth a tree that will not rot*: he goes to the forest, and chooses the best tree for his purpose he can find, even one that will not rot, as the cypress; and though he cannot get an idol made of metal, but is forced to have one of wood, yet he will get the best he can, that will last longest, an incorruptible deity, as he fancies:

*he seeketh unto him a cunning workman, to prepare a graven image that shall not be moved*: having decided upon his tree, and what sort of wood to make his god of, he looks out for an ingenious carpenter and carver, a good workman, to make it in the form of an image, and grave, or rather carve it, in the best manner he can, and then fasten it in a proper place, that it may not fall; a poor helpless deity, that cannot secure itself, and much less be of any service to its worshippers.

**Ver. 21.** *Have ye not known?*] This is the speech of the prophet, directed to the idolaters, appealing to their own natural knowledge, who, from the light of nature, might know that idols were nothing, had no divinity in them: that it is God that made the earth and governs the world, and who only ought to be worshipped:

*have ye not heard?* by tradition from the ancients, from your forefathers, who received it from theirs, and have delivered it to you:

*hath it not been told you from the beginning?* from the beginning of your states and kingdoms, and even from the beginning of the world, by the wisest and best of men that have been in it, that those things are true before related, and what follow:

*have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?* the being of God, the invisible things of him, his eternal power and Godhead, from the things that are made, even from his founding of the earth; as well as such knowledge and understanding has been as early as that, and might be continued from it: or,

*have ye not understood the foundations of the earth*<sup>f775</sup>? what the earth is founded upon, and who laid the foundations of it; no other than that divine Being described in the next words.

**Ver. 22.** *It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, &c.*] Or, “the globe<sup>f776</sup>” of it; for the earth is spherical or globular: not a flat plain, but round, hung as a ball in the air; here Jehovah sits as the Lord and Sovereign; being the Maker of it, he is above it, orders and directs its motion, and governs all things in it: Kimchi rightly observes, that the heavens are the circle of the earth, which is the centre of them, and around which they are; and so it signifies, that the Lord sits or dwells in the heavens, from whence he beholds the children of men:

*and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;* or “locusts<sup>f777</sup>”; as one upon a very great eminence looking down beholds creatures as exceeding small and little; and if the Israelites were to the “anakim” or giants as grasshoppers, (<sup>4133</sup>Numbers 13:33), much more must puny mortals be such in the sight of God, and in comparison of him; and this may denote, not only the minuteness of men, but what weak, impotent, useless, worthless, and short lived creatures men are:

*that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain;* alluding to the firmament or expanse made at the creation, and still continued; which is as a curtain to himself, which he draws around himself, he dwelling in the highest heavens, and in light inaccessible to mortals; and which he stretches out as a canopy around this earth, for the use of the inhabitants of it: or, “as a little thing”; or, as a little skin<sup>f778</sup>; and which he stretches out as easily as a man can stretch out that:

*and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in it;* for himself to dwell in, and so stretches out the heavens like curtains about him; tents being made of such, and often of skins.

**Ver. 23.** *That bringeth princes to nothing, &c.*] The great men of the earth, kings, rulers, and nobles, these he brings to the dust; and all their counsels, schemes, and purposes, come to nothing; and their monarchies and kingdoms too in time. Where are now the Babylonish, Persian, and Grecian monarchies, and those great princes that formerly reigned in them?

*he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity;* their decrees and decisions to stand for nothing, as “tohu” and “bohu”, the first of which words is used here; so that they are no more regarded and attended to.

**Ver. 24.** *Yea, they shall not be planted, &c.*] As trees are, like the cedars in Lebanon, though they may seem to be such; but be like the grass of the field, and herbs of the earth: or, “even they shall be”, as if they were “not

planted<sup>f779</sup>”, they shall not grow and flourish; or they shall be plucked up, and be no more; this is said of the princes and judges of the earth; nay,

*they shall not be sown*; as seed is, which springing up, brings forth fruit, but so it shall not be with them; or they shall be as if they had not been sown, no fruit being brought forth by them:

*yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth*; so as to continue and abide, but they shall soon vanish and disappear, as the most powerful princes and wisest judges do. The Targum is,

“although they multiply, although they increase, although their children become great in the earth:”

“and” or “yea”,

*he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither*; as grass withers, when a severe wind blows upon it:

*and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble*; which is not able to stand before the force of it; and as unable are the greatest potentates on earth to stand before the tempest of divine wrath and vengeance; if God blows but upon them in anger, all their glory and grandeur, pomp and power, wither away like the flower of the field; and especially if he comes forth in all the fury of his wrath in a tempestuous way against them, they are no more able to stand before him that stubble before a violent storm: (see <sup>4665</sup>Revelation 6:15-17). The Targum is,

“yet, even he will send his fury upon them; and his word shall take them away, as a whirlwind stubble.”

**Ver. 25.** *To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One?*] Or be upon a level with? since the greatest of men on earth are brought to nothing by him, and are no more: this is repeated from (<sup>2408</sup>Isaiah 40:18) and supported with fresh strength of argument, to show that there is nothing whatever, that is a fit likeness and similitude, by which to represent the Lord.

**Ver. 26.** *Lift up your eyes on high, &c.*] From the earth, and the inhabitants of it, even those of the greatest power and influence in it, to the heavens above, those that are visible to the eye:

*and behold who hath created these things*; that are seen in the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars; consider the Creator of them, what a glorious Being he must be; what power he must be possessed of; what dazzling light he must dwell in; what glory and majesty he must be clothed with; and how infinitely transcending all mortal creatures he must be:

*that bringeth out their host by number*; not only into being, at the first creation of them, but at every proper season; causing the sun to rise every morning, the stars to appear at night, and the moon in its revolution; as a general brings forth his army, marshals it in order, musters it, and takes the number of his soldiers:

*he calleth them all by names*; suitable to their position and influence; he knows the proper names of them all, which no astrologer can pretend unto; and this is such knowledge as no general of an army has; for though the stars are innumerable to men, the names of most unknown, they are all known to him that made them, (<sup>4570</sup>Psalm 147:4):

*by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power not one faileth*; through the omnipotence of God, not only the sun and moon, the great luminaries, are continued in being, and constantly observe their order; but even every star keeps its place, or performs its course, and retains its influence, and in every instance obeys the commands of its Creator; never fails of appearing at his order, and of doing what he appoints it should. Kimchi gives the sense thus, that according to the virtue and efficacy that there is in every star, so is its name; and because of the strength and power that is in everyone of them, they remain unchangeably and unalterably the same as when they were first created; which not only holds true of the sun and moon, but of the stars lesser and greater. The Targum is,

“because of the multitude of strength, and the power of might, not one is hindered from its order;”

wherefore, as there is no likeness on earth, so none in heaven, with which the Lord is to be likened, or to which he can be equalled. This may respect not the might and power of the Lord, in supporting and maintaining these creatures in their being and usefulness; but the strength and power of the mightiest creatures, to hinder their influence and service: for the words may be rendered, “through the multitude of strength”, or anyone being “strong in power, not one indeed fails<sup>4780</sup>”; or is wanting, that is, through the strength or power of the mightiest creatures, angels or men, the hosts

of heaven cannot be stopped in their course, or hindered in their work appointed to do, or be deprived of their being.

**Ver. 27.** *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, &c.*] The Jews, supposed to be in captivity, are here meant, according to Jarchi and Kimchi; whom the prophet reproves, for murmuring at the calamities and afflictions there endured by them; but it may be the church and people of God, in Gospel times, are here intended, being under suffering circumstances, either under Rome Pagan, or Rome Papal; not only inwardly repining, but openly complaining and uttering, as follows:

*my way is hid from the Lord*; meaning not their course of life, or their religious actions, their profession of the Gospel, their attendance on public worship, their prayers and other duties of religion; but their sufferings for his name's sake, the tribulations they endured, the afflicted way they walked in, which they imagined God took no notice of, since no way was opened in Providence for their deliverance out of them:

*and my judgment is passed over from my God*; my cause and case are neglected by him; he does not undertake my cause, nor plead it against my enemies, or right my wrongs, and avenge the injuries done me, or deliver me out of the hands of those that contend with me. The answer to which complaint follows, and which clearly shows there was no just foundation for it.

**Ver. 28.** *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard?* &c.] From the history of the church in all ages; from the experience of all good men; from their own knowledge and observation; from the Scriptures, and the prophets, the interpreters of them; both that what is before suggested is wrong, and that what follows is true,

*that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?* or, “the God of the world”; that has made it, and upholds it, and governs it, and judges righteously in it; who is from everlasting to everlasting, unchangeably the same; whose name alone is Jehovah, the self-existent and all comprehending Being, the Maker and Former of all things; who has not only created the earth, and the foundations of it, as the Targum, or the continent, and the habitable part of the world, that is most known and dwelt in, but even the extremities of the earth; and therefore knows and will take care of his own people, let them be where they will: and though the work of creation, and of upholding

creatures in their beings, and of governing the world, and providing for all in it, and of taking care of his church and people in particular, requires so much power, as well as wisdom, yet he never sinks under it, nor is weary of it; wherefore they have no reason to give way to such unbelief and despondency, as above expressed:

*there is no searching of his understanding*; it is infinite, it reaches to all persons and things, and therefore he cannot be at a loss to provide for his people, or plead their cause; nor can their case be unknown to him, or he want either power or skill to help them.

**Ver. 29.** *He giveth power to the faint*, &c.] Who are ready to faint under afflictions, because they have not immediate deliverance, or their prayers are not answered at once, or promises not fulfilled as they expected; to such he gives fresh supplies of spiritual strength; he strengthens their faith, and enlarges their views, to behold the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, and confirms his blessings and promises of grace unto them, (<sup>49713</sup>Psalm 27:13). The Targum is,

“who giveth wisdom to the righteous that breathe after the words of the law:”

*and to them that have no might he increaseth strength*; not that they have no might at all, strictly speaking; for then it could not be properly said their strength was increased by him; but that their might and power were very small, and that in their own apprehensions they had none, and then it is that fresh strength is given them; as the apostle says, “when I am weak, then am I strong”; (<sup>47120</sup>2 Corinthians 12:10), though this may be understood, not of the strength of their graces, but of their sins and corruptions: a word from the same root as this here used signifies “iniquity”; and the sense may be, that the Lord increases the spiritual strength of such on whom the lust’s, corruptions, and virtuosity of nature have not the power and dominion<sup>f781</sup>.

**Ver. 30.** *Even the youths shall faint and be weary*, &c.] Such as are in the prime of their strength, and glory in it, yet through the hand of God upon them, by one disease or another, their strength is weakened in the way; or they meet with that which they are not equal to, and sink under, and are discouraged, and obliged to desist. Some think the Babylonians and Chaldeans are here meant, the enemies of Israel, and by whom they were carried captive. The Targum interprets this clause, as well as the following, of wicked and ungodly men; and so do Jarchi and Kimchi: it may be

applied to the Heathen emperors, who persecuted the church of God, and were smitten by him, and found it too hard a work to extirpate Christianity out of the world, which they thought to have done; and also to all the antichristian states, who have given their power and strength to the beast:

*and the young men shall utterly fail*; or, “falling shall fall”<sup>f782</sup>; stumble and fall, die and perish; or, however, not be able to perform their enterprise.

**Ver. 31.** *But they that wait upon the Lord, &c.*] As children on their parents, to do them honour, to obey their commands, and receive food and blessings from them; as servants on their masters, to know their pleasure, do their work, and have their wages; as clients on their patrons, to have advice of them, put their cause into their hands, and know how it goes; and as beggars at the door, who knock and wait, tell their case and wait, meet with repulses, yet keep their place, and continue waiting: such an act supposes a knowledge and reverence of God, confidence in him, attendance on him, not with the body only, in public and private, but with the soul also, and with some degree of constancy, and with patience and quietness: the Lord is to be waited upon for the manifestations of himself, who sometimes hides himself, but is to be waited for, since he has his set time to show himself again, and his presence is worth waiting for; also for the performance of his promises, which may be expected from his perfections, the nature of the promises, and their being in Christ; likewise for answers of prayer, and for the fresh discoveries of pardoning grace and mercy; and as Old Testament saints waited for the first coming of Christ, so New Testament saints for his second coming, and for eternal glory and happiness: and such “shall renew their strength”; which is to be understood of spiritual! strength in the heart, and of the graces of the Spirit there: it supposes strength received already, which natural men have not, but converted men have; and yet they want more, and more they shall have; to assist them in the performance of duty, to enable them to resist Satan and his temptations, and the corruptions of nature, and to cause them to endure afflictions and persecutions patiently, and to persevere unto the end:

*they shall mount up with wings as eagles*; swiftly and strongly; it is expressive of the motion of the affections heavenwards towards God and Christ, and things above; of the entrance of faith and hope within the veil, and of the exercise of these graces on Christ, who is now at the right hand of God; of the expectation of glory and happiness in heaven hereafter, and of present support under afflictions, the Lord bearing them as on eagles’

wings; (see <sup><1943E></sup>Psalm 103:5 <sup><2187E></sup>Song of Solomon 3:7 <sup><23316></sup>Isaiah 33:16  
<sup><1294></sup>Exodus 19:4) (<sup><16321></sup>Deuteronomy 32:11,12) <sup>f783</sup>:

*they shall run, and not be weary*; in the way of God's commandments; which shows great affection for them, haste to obey them, delight and pleasure, cheerfulness and alacrity, therein, so as to be without weariness:

*and they shall, walk, and not faint*: in the ways of God, in the name of the Lord, or in Christ, as they have received him; leaning on him, trusting in him, continuing to do so, till they receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls; and so shall not sink under their burdens, nor give out till they enjoy it; different persons, though all of them believers, may be here intended; particularly Christians under the Gospel dispensation, tried and exercised by many enemies; some shall soar aloft, and dwell on high; others, though they cannot rise and "fly" so swiftly and strongly, yet shall "run" without weariness; and others, though they can neither fly nor run, yet shall "walk" without fainting.