

CHAPTER 42

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 42

This chapter begins with a prophecy concerning the Messiah, under the character of the servant of the Lord, and his elect, whom he supported, and was well pleased with; whose work is pointed at, and for which he was well qualified with the Spirit without measure, (²³⁰¹Isaiah 42:1) and is described by his humility and meekness, (²³⁰²Isaiah 42:2), by his tenderness to weak and ignorant persons, (²³⁰³Isaiah 42:3) and by his courage and resolution, (²³⁰⁴Isaiah 42:4) then follow his call to his work, and the several parts of it, introduced with setting forth the greatness of God that called him, as the Creator of the heavens and of the earth, and of men upon it, (²³⁰⁵Isaiah 42:5-7), whose name is Jehovah, and whose glory is incommunicable to a creature, and whose knowledge reaches to future things, which are predicted by him, (²³⁰⁶Isaiah 42:8,9), and then Gentiles are called upon to praise the Lord, and give glory to him, partly for the above promises concerning the Messiah, (²³⁰⁷Isaiah 42:10-12), and partly for the destruction of his enemies, (²³⁰⁸Isaiah 42:13-15), and also for his gracious regard to such who had been blind and ignorant, (²³⁰⁹Isaiah 42:16), the confusion of idolaters is prophesied of, and an exhortation is given them to make use of the means of light and knowledge, (²³¹⁰Isaiah 42:17,18), and the blindness, ignorance, and stupidity of the Jews, are exposed, though there was a remnant among them with whom the Lord was well pleased, for the sake of the righteousness of his Son, (²³¹¹Isaiah 42:19-21), but as for the body of the people, they were to be given up to the spoilers and robbers for their sins and disobedience, and be the butt of the divine wrath and vengeance, (²³¹²Isaiah 42:22-24).

Ver. 1. *Behold my servant, whom I uphold*, &c.] The Targum is,

“behold my servant the Messiah;”

and Kimchi on the place says, this is the King Messiah; and so Abarbinel^{f807} interprets it of him, and other Jewish writers, and which is right; for the prophet speaks not of himself, as Aben Ezra thinks; nor of Cyrus, as Saadiah Gaon; nor of the people of Israel, as Jarchi; but of Christ, as it is

applied, (⁴⁰²⁷Matthew 12:17,18) who is spoken of under the character of a “servant”, as he is; not as a divine Person, for as such he is the Son of God; but as man, and in his office as Mediator; a servant of the Lord, not of angels, or men, but of his divine Father; who chose him, called and sent him, and assigned him his work; which was principally the redemption of his people, and which he diligently, faithfully, and fully performed; in which he was “upheld” as man and Mediator by his Father, not only in his being as man, but was strengthened and helped in his mediatorial service so that he did not sink under the mighty weight of the sins of his people, or of the wrath of God: or, “whom I lean upon”^{f808}; as a master on his servant, so Kimchi; he relied on him to do the work he undertook; he trusted him with his own glory, and the salvation of his people. This prophecy is ushered in with a “behold”; exciting attention to what is said concerning Christ, as of the greatest importance; directing the eye of faith to him for righteousness and salvation; and as expressive of admiration at him, that he who was the Son of God should become a servant, and undertake the salvation of men:

mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: this character of “elect” may respect the choice of the human nature to the grace of union with the Son of God; which was chosen out from among the people, and separated from them for that purpose; and was preordained to be the Lamb slain for the redemption of man, and appointed to glory; and likewise the choice of Christ to office, to be the Mediator between God and man; to be the Saviour and Redeemer of the Lord’s people; to be the Head of the church, and to be the foundation and the corner stone of that spiritual building; and to be the Judge of quick and dead: and with him, as such, was the Lord “well pleased, or delighted”; with his person; as the Son of God; and with all his chosen, as considered in him; with what he did as his servant; with the righteousness he wrought out; with the sacrifice he offered up; and with his sufferings and death, through which peace and reconciliation were made with God for sinners:

I have put my Spirit upon him; my Holy Spirit, as the Targum; not on him as a divine Person, as such he needed him not; but as man, with which he was filled without measure at his incarnation, and which rested upon him, and qualified him for his work and office, as Prophet, Priest, and King:

he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles; the Gospel, the produce of divine wisdom; the Gospel of God, whose judgment is according to truth; the rule of human judgment in things spiritual and saving, and by which

Christ judges and rules in the hearts of his people; this he brought forth out of his Father's bosom, out of his own heart, and published it in person to the Jews, and by his apostles to the converted by it, became subject to his rule and government. Gentiles, who being converted by it, became subject to his rule and government.

Ver. 2. *He shall not cry*, &c.]. According to Aben Ezra and Kimchi, as a judge in court is obliged to extend his voice that he may be heard: the Evangelist Matthew renders it, "he shall not strive"; or contend in a disputatious way, about mere words and things to no profit, or litigate a point in law; he shall bring no complaints, or enter an action against any, but rather suffer wrong, as he advises his followers, (^{<1054>}Matthew 5:40), for this does not respect the lowness of his voice in his ministry; in this sense he often cried, as Wisdom is said to do, (^{<1011>}Proverbs 1:20,21 8:1-3 ^{<1075>}John 7:37): "nor lift up"; that is, his voice, as Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Melech supply it; or, as others, he shall not lift up faces, or accept persons; and so the Vulgate Latin version renders it,

neither shall he accept any person; or the person of any man, which is true of Christ; but the former sense seems best, which agrees with what goes before and follows after:

nor cause his voice to be heard in the street; his voice was heard in the street in a ministerial way; he sometimes preached in the street, as in many other public places, (^{<1035>}Luke 13:26), but not in a clamorous contentious way; not in an opprobrious and menacing manner; nor in a way of ostentation, boasting of himself, his doctrines, and miracles, but behaved with great humility and meekness; his kingdom was without pomp and noise, which worldly princes are attended with; but this was not to be, nor was it his case; (See Gill on "^{<1029>}Matthew 12:19").

Ver. 3. *A bruised reed shall not break*, &c.]. The tenderness of Christ to weak and ignorant persons is here and in the next clause expressed; by whom young converts or weak believers seem to be designed; who are compared to a "reed", because worthless with respect to God, whom they cannot profit; and in the view of men, who reckon them as nothing; and in themselves, and in their own view, who judge themselves unworthy of the least of mercies; and because they are weak, not only as all men are, of which weakness they are sensible; but they are weak in grace, especially in faith, and have but little hope, their love is the strongest; and because they are wavering like the reed, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine,

and shaken with the temptations of Satan, and disturbed with many doubts and fears; and are like a “bruised” reed that is squeezed, and almost broke to pieces, and so of no use; these are broken in heart, under a sense of sin and unworthiness; whose spirits are bruised and wounded with it, and whose hearts are contrite on account of it. On these Christ does not lay his iron rod, but holds out the golden sceptre of his grace to them; he does not call them to service and sufferings beyond their strength; but strengthens, supports, and upholds them with the right hand of his righteousness; he binds up their broken hearts, having poured in the balm of Gilead, his own blood, and the wine and oil of his love; he encourages them in their application to him for salvation, and manifests his pardoning grace, and restores comforts to them, and revives their souls:

and the smoking flax shall he not quench; or, “the wick of a candle;^{f809}” which just going out, has some heat, a little light, smokes, and is offensive; so the persons intended by it are fired or lighted by the divine word; have some heat of affection in them to spiritual things, but have but little light; into the corruption of nature into the glories of Christ’s person; into the doctrines of the Gospel; into the everlasting love of God, and the covenant of grace; and but little light of joy and comfort, and this almost gone, and seemingly ready to go out; and yet Christ will not extinguish it, or suffer it to be extinct; he does not discourage small beginnings of grace, or despise the day of small things; he blows up their light into a flame; he increases their spiritual light and knowledge; supplies them with the oil of grace; trims, snuffs, and causes their lamps to burn brighter. The Targum is,

“the meek, who are like to a bruised reed, shall not be broken; and the poor, who are as obscure as flax (or a lamp ready to go out), shall not be extinct:”

he shall bring forth judgment unto truth; which some understand of Christ’s severity to wicked men, in opposition to his tenderness to his own people; (see ^{<3104>}Isaiah 11:4), others of the Gospel, as preached by him in truth, as in (^{<2301>}Isaiah 42:1), but rather it designs the power of his Spirit and grace accompanying the word, to the carrying on of his own work in the hearts of his people; which, though attended with many difficulties and discouragements, shall go on, and be performed; grace will break through all obstructions, and prove victorious at last; (see ^{<4021>}Matthew 12:20).

Ver. 4. *He shall not fail*, &c.] For want of strength to go through the work of redemption: or, “grow dim”^{f810} and dark, as a lamp for want of oil, or as

the wick of a candle ready to go out. Hence the Septuagint version, “he shall shine^{f811}”; in the glory of his person, as the Son of God; in the fulness of his grace, as Mediator, which shall never fail; and in the hearts of his people by his Spirit; and in his Gospel published to the world:

nor be discouraged; at the number, power, and menaces of his enemies, he had to grapple with, sin, Satan, the world, and death: or,

nor be broken^{f812}; with the weight of all the sins of his people upon him; and with a sense of divine wrath; and with the whole punishment due unto them, inflicted on him, enough to have broke the backs and spirits of men and angels; but he stood up under the mighty load, and did not sink beneath it, but endured all with an invincible courage and resolution of mind:

till he have set judgment in the earth; fully satisfied the justice of God for the sins of his people, and performed the work of their redemption in righteousness; and then he sent and settled his Gospel in the world, proclaiming the same; and fixed a set of Gospel ordinances to continue the remembrance of it, till his second coming. Maimonides^{f813} produces this passage to prove that the Messiah shall die, because it is said, “he shall not fail--till”, &c.; but this does not signify that he should fail afterwards, but that he should continue always:

and the isles shall wait for his law; his doctrine or Gospel, the law or doctrine of faith, particularly that of justification by his righteousness, with every other; this the inhabitants of the islands, or distant countries, the Gentiles, should be desirous of hearing, readily embrace and receive, and trust in Christ, made known to them in it. The Septuagint version is, “and in his name shall the Gentiles trust”; and so in (~~4021~~ Matthew 12:20 ~~4038~~ Acts 28:28 13:42,48).

Ver. 5. *Thus saith God the Lord*, &c.] The God of the world, as the Targum. This, with what follows, is a preface to the call of Christ, to the great work of redemption; setting forth the greatness of God as a Creator, that calls him to it, and thereby encouraging him as man and Mediator in it, as well as the faith of his people to regard him as their Saviour and Redeemer, and believe that this work he was called unto should be performed by him; for what is it that God, the Creator of all things, cannot do?

he that created the heavens, and stretched them out: he first made them out of nothing, and stretched out the firmament of them as a curtain and canopy over the earth, and them as a tent for himself to dwell in, (^{<234D>}Isaiah 40:22):

he that spread forth the earth; into the length and breadth it has, for man and beast to dwell on it:

and that which cometh out of it; grass, herbs, and trees, which he has spread all over it:

he that giveth breath unto the people upon it; as he did to man at first, he breathed into him the breath of life, and as he gives to all since, (^{<0017>}Genesis 2:7 ^{<4175>}Acts 17:25):

and spirit to them that walk therein; not only breath in common with the beasts of the field, and other creatures, but a rational spirit, or a reasonable soul, an intellective faculty, a capacity of understanding things, as brutes have not. Jarchi interprets this of the Holy Spirit, which God gives to them that walk before him.

Ver. 6. *I the Lord have called thee in righteousness*, &c.] Not the Prophet Isaiah, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra interpret it; nor the people of Israel, as Kimchi; but the Messiah, whom Jehovah called to the office of Mediator, in a righteous way and manner, consistent with his own perfections; and not against the will of Christ, but with his full consent: or, “unto righteousness”, as some^{f814}; so the Arabic version; to fulfil his righteous purposes, concerning the welfare and salvation of his people; to perform his righteous promises of his coming, and of good things by him; to show his strict vindictive justice against sin, in the punishment of it; and to bring in an everlasting righteousness for his people: or it may be rendered, “I have called thee with righteousness^{f815}”; Christ came a righteous Person, holy in his nature, harmless in his life, and truly deserved the character of Jesus Christ the righteous:

and will hold thine hand: denoting his presence with him, and nearness unto him; his favour and affection for him; his counsel and direction of him; the support and assistance he gave him; and the strength he received from him as man, to go through his work:

and will keep thee; as the apple of his eye, being dear unto him; from being hurt by his enemies till the time came to be delivered into their hands; and

from miscarrying in his work; and from the power of the grave, so as to be long detained in it:

and give thee for a covenant of the people; Christ is a covenantee, a party concerned in the covenant of grace; the representative of his people in it; the surety, Mediator, messenger, and ratifier of it; the great blessing in it; the sum and substance of it; all the blessings and promises of it are in him, and as such he is “given”; it is of God’s free grace that he was appointed and intrusted with all this in eternity, and was sent in time to confirm and secure it for “the people”; given him of his Father, redeemed by him and to whom the Spirit applies the blessings and promises of the covenant; even the elect of God, both among Jews and Gentiles, especially the latter, as follows:

for a light of the Gentiles; who were in the dark as to the true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, and the way of righteousness and salvation by him, and of all divine and spiritual things; now Christ, through the ministry of the word by his Spirit, was a light unto them; by which they were enlightened into their own state and condition by nature, and into the knowledge of himself, and the mysteries of grace.

Ver. 7. *To open the blind eyes*, &c.] Of the idolatrous Gentiles, who were spiritually blind, and knew not the wretchedness of their case; the exceeding sinfulness of sin; their need of a Saviour, and who he was; as they did, when their eyes were opened by means of the Gospel sent among them, through the energy of the divine Spirit; for this is a work of almighty power and efficacious grace:

to bring out the prisoners from the prison; who were concluded in sin, shut up in unbelief, and under the law, the captives of Satan, and held fast prisoners by him and their own lusts, under the dominion of which they were:

and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house: of sin, Satan, and the law; being under which, they were in a state of darkness and ignorance as to things divine and spiritual. The allusion is to prisons, which are commonly dark places. Vitringa, by the “prisoners”, understands the Jews shut up under the law; and by those in “darkness” the Gentiles, destitute of all divine knowledge.

Ver. 8. *I am the Lord, that is my name*, &c.] Jehovah, a name expressive of his self-existence, eternity, and immutability; a name by which he made

himself known to Israel of old, and which is peculiar to him, and does not belong to another, and so distinguishes him from all false gods; (see ~~<1184>~~ Exodus 3:14 6:3 ~~<6818>~~ Psalm 83:18) or, “Hu [is] my name”^{f816}; to which **αυτος**, “he himself the same”, answers; (see ~~<1927>~~ Psalm 102:27), compared with (~~<3138>~~ Hebrews 13:8) and this is one of the names of God with the Jews^{f817}; as Hou is with the Turks to this day; which, in Arabic, signifies “him”: that is, God, as Monsieur Thevenot^{f818} observes; (see ~~<2482>~~ Isaiah 48:12):

and my glory will I not give to another; that is, to another god, to a strange god, to an idol; as that has not the nature, it ought not to have the name of deity, nor divine worship given to it: this the Lord will not admit of, but will punish those, be they Heathens, or are called Christians, that give the glory to idols that is due unto his name. This is not to be understood to the exclusion of the Son and Spirit, who are with the Father the one Jehovah, and share in the same glory; the Son is the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the Spirit is the Spirit of glory, (~~<3003>~~ Hebrews 1:3 ~~<6044>~~ 1 Peter 4:14) nor will he suffer the glory of the justification, salvation, and conversion of men, to be given to their works, will, and power, which is entirely due to his own grace, to the blood and righteousness of his Son, and to the energy of the divine Spirit:

neither my praise to graven images; which serves to explain the former clause, what is meant by his “glory”, and who by “another”, to whom he will not give it. Papists should observe this, for it respects not merely or only the graven images of the Heathens, but chiefly those among them that bear the Christian name; for this relates to New Testament times. The Targum is,

“and my glory, in which I am revealed to you, I will not give to another people; nor my praise to worshippers of images.”

Ver. 9. *Behold, the former things are come to pass*, &c.] Which the Lord had foretold in former times, as to Abraham, concerning the affliction of his posterity in Egypt, the bringing them out from thence, and settling them in the land of Canaan; and other things by Moses and Joshua, and other prophets; and by Isaiah; and particularly the captivity of the ten tribes, which was now come to pass in the times of Hezekiah:

and new things do I declare; as the captivity of Judah and Benjamin, and their restoration by Cyrus; and more especially the mission and incarnation

of Christ, his sufferings and death, and redemption and salvation by him; which were not only things to come, but new things, famous and excellent ones:

before they spring up I tell you of them or “before they bud forth”,^{f819}; while the seeds of them were under ground, sown in the purposes and decrees of God, he spoke of them in prophecy; and now former prophecies being fulfilled, and new ones delivered out, concerning things of which there was no appearance, and yet there was the greatest reason to believe their accomplishment, from the fulfilment of the former; this must be a strong proof and confirmation of the Lord being the true God, and the only one.

Ver. 10. *Sing unto the Lord a new song*, &c.] On account of the new things before prophesied of, and now done; on account of redemption and salvation by Christ, and the conversion of the Gentiles through the light of the Gospel brought among them; the song of redeeming love, and for the Gospel, and regenerating grace; and not the Jews only, but the Gentiles also, are called upon to sing this song, as having a special share in the blessings, the subject of it: hence it follows,

and his praise from the end of the earth; thither the Gospel being sent, and there made effectual to the conversion of many, these are exhorted to sing and show forth the praises of him who had called them out of Heathenish blindness and darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel and grace of God:

ye that go down into the sea; in ships, that trade by sea; such as the Phoenicians, Tyrians, and Sidonians, to whom the Gospel came, and where it was preached with success, to the conversion of many of them, and therefore had reason to join in this new song; (see ^{<4119>}Acts 11:19 21:3,4) or such that went by sea to distant parts, on purpose to publish the Gospel, as Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy; and who, succeeding in their work, had reason to rejoice; (see ^{<4130>}Acts 13:4 16:11 20:13 21:1):

and all that is therein: or “the fulness of it”,^{f820}; meaning not the fishes in it, but the islands of it, as next explained:

the isles, and the inhabitants thereof; as Cyprus, Crete, and other isles, which heard the joyful sound of the Gospel, and embraced it, (^{<4130>}Acts 13:4 ^{<5005>}Titus 1:5), and, as the sea often denotes the western part of the world from Judea, this may design the European parts of it, and the islands in it,

particularly ours of Great Britain and Ireland, whither the Gospel came very early.

Ver. 11. *Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, &c.]* The eastern part of the world, Arabia Deserta, and the inhabitants of the cities which were in it:

the villages that Kedar doth inhabit; or the “courts”^{f821}, or tents, the Kedarenes inhabited, who were Arabians, and dwelt in tents, which they pitched here and there, for the convenience of their flocks; and so the Targum,

“the Arabians that inhabit the wilderness shall praise:”

let the inhabitants of the rock sing: or of Petra, which Jerom says was a city of Palestine. It was the metropolis of Arabia Petraea, which whole country may be here meant, and the inhabitants of it, who had reason to sing for joy, when the Gospel was preached unto them; as it was by the Apostle Paul in Arabia, (^{f817}Galatians 1:17):

let them shout from the top of the mountains; the wild, savage, and barbarous people that dwell there, but now become civilized, as well as evangelized, by the Gospel; or the messengers and ministers of the word, whose feet on those mountains were beautiful, bringing the good tidings of peace and salvation by Christ. The Targum interprets this of the resurrection of the dead,

“the dead, when they shall go out of the house of their world, from the tops of the mountains shall lift up their voice^{f822}.”

Ver. 12. *Let them give glory unto the Lord, &c.]* For all the great and good things he has done for them, in sending his Gospel to them, calling them by his grace, enlightening their minds, and revealing his Son in them, and making them partakers of the blessings of his grace, and entitling them to eternal glory and happiness:

and declare his praise in the islands; as on the western continent, and the isles of it; so on the eastern continent, and the islands of it, the islands of Greece, the islands in the Aegean sea.

Ver. 13. *The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, &c.]* In the ministry of the word,

conquering and to conquer; girding his “sword” on his thigh; causing his “arrows” to be sharp in the hearts of his enemies; clothing the word with power;

making the weapons of warfare, put into the hands of his ministering servants,

mighty, to pull down the “strong holds” of sin and Satan, to cast: down the proud “imagination” of men’s hearts, and to

bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of himself; or in the army of Constantine, whom he used as his instrument for the destruction of the Pagan empire, and of Paganism in it, and for the establishment of Christianity:

he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; or “a man of wars”^{f823}; that has been used to fight battles; Christ is represented as a warrior, (~~691~~ Revelation 19:11), his church is in a warfare state; his subjects are soldiers; his ministers are his generals under him, and with them he goes forth, and stirs up his own jealousy, his wrath and fury against his enemies, and takes vengeance on them, and the jealousy of his ministers and people, for his own glory:

he shall cry, yea, roar; not only shout aloud, as soldiers do, when they make an onset, but make a hideous noise, as the old Romans did, to frighten and dispirit their enemies. Christ, in the ministry of the word, not only cries, and calls, and invites souls, sensible of themselves and their condition, to come unto him, and partake of his grace; but he roars as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and threatens impenitent and unbelieving sinners with his wrath and vengeance:

he shall prevail against his enemies: he shall conquer and subdue them by his Spirit and grace, and make them his willing people in the day of his power; and such who will not have him to reign over them, he will rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces as a potter’s vessel.

Ver. 14. *I have long time holden my peace*, &c.] For many hundred years the Lord suffered the Gentile world to walk in their own ways, to worship their idols, and took no notice of them; he winked at and overlooked their times of ignorance, and did not bring down his vengeance upon them, nor stir up all his wrath; nor indeed did he send any among them, to reprove

and convince them of their errors, and threaten them with “ruin”, in case of their continuance in them:

I have been still, and refrained myself; had been silent, and said nothing against them in a providential way, but curbed and kept in his wrath and displeasure at their idolatry, as a woman in travail “holds in”⁸²⁴ her breath as long as she can; to which the allusion is, as appears by what follows:

now will I cry like a travailing woman; when sharp pains are upon her, and just going to be delivered; and that so loud as to be heard all over the house. This may be taken in a good sense; the ministers of the Gospel travail in birth, and Christ in them, until he is formed in the hearts of men by regenerating and converting grace, (~~ROM~~ Galatians 4:19 ~~ROM~~ Romans 8:19,20) and in an ill sense; for swift and sudden destruction, which should come on his enemies, as travail on a woman with child. So the Targum,

“as pains on a woman with child, my judgment shall be revealed (or exposed) upon them.”

I will destroy and devour at once; all enemies that should oppose him in the spread of the Gospel, in the destruction of Paganism, and establishment of Christianity in the Roman empire, who are described in the next verse.

Ver. 15. *I will make waste mountains and hills*, &c.] Kingdoms, greater and lesser; kings and governors, as Jarchi interprets it; and so Kimchi understands it of the kings of the nations; by them are meant the emperors of Rome, and their governors under them, that set themselves against Christ and his Gospel, but were overcome by him; these mountains and hills became a plain before him: “every mountain and island were moved out of their places, and the kings of the earth, and the great men, &c. hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and called upon them to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb”, (~~REV~~ Revelation 6:14-16):

and dry up all their herbs; the common people, and common soldiers that were with them, and on their side; comparable, for smallness, weakness, and number, to the grass of the mountains and hills:

and I will make the rivers islands, and dry up the pools; extirpate all the remains of idolatry, rivers and fountains being sacred with the Heathens, as mountains and hills were places where sacrifices were offered to idols. Unless by it rather should be meant, that the Lord would remove all

impediments out of the way of his people, or which were obstacles of their conversion; just as he dried up the waters of the Red sea and Jordan, to make way for the people of Israel; to which the allusion may be, and which agrees with the following words.

Ver. 16. *And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not,* &c.] The Targum interprets this of the people of Israel, thus,

“I will lead the house of Israel, which are like to the blind, in a way which they knew not.”

But it is better to understand it of the Gentiles, who, before the light of the Gospel came among them, were blind as to the true knowledge of God, and especially as in Christ; and of Christ, and the way of peace, life, and salvation by him; and of themselves, and their miserable estate and condition; and of the Spirit of God, and his operations; and of the Scriptures, the Gospel, and the doctrines of it; and which is the case of all men in a state of nature: but the Lord, by his Spirit, opens the eyes of their understandings, and shows them those things they were blind in, and ignorant of, and brings them by a way they knew not before; which way is Christ, the only way to the Father; the way of peace, righteousness, and life; the way to heaven, and eternal happiness: this they knew not before, but thought they must make their own way to God, and their peace with him; must be justified by their own works, and work out their own salvation; but, in conversion, this way to Christ is made known and plain unto them; and in this way the Lord brings all his people to eternal glory:

I will lead them in paths that they have not known; in the paths of duty and truth; in the paths of faith, righteousness, and holiness, and in the ordinances of the Gospel; which they were aliens and strangers to before:

I will make darkness light before them; by going before them himself, as before the children of Israel in a pillar of fire by night; by giving his word to enlighten them; by granting his good Spirit, as a spirit of illumination to them; and by lifting up the light of his countenance on them:

and crooked things straight; remove all obstructions, bear them up under all discouragements, and carry them through all difficulties:

these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them; which may be depended upon, being promised by him that is able to perform, is true, and faithful, and changes not; and, when done, shall not be the last done for

them; he will never leave them, nor forsake them, till he has brought them safe to glory.

Ver. 17. *They shall be turned back*, &c.] Either from their former course, from their idolatry and their idols, and be converted, and turn to the living God; or it may be understood of such Gentiles as were not converted, when others were, who should be put to flight, and should fly to the rocks and mountains to hide and cover them from the wrath of God; for this phrase is used of the overthrow of enemies, of their being obliged to turn their backs and flee:

they shall be greatly ashamed that trust in graven images; as converted persons when they come to be convinced of the folly of their idolatrous practices are; and if not converted, yet are confounded when they find their idols cannot help and assist them, nor deliver them out of their trouble:

that say to the molten images, ye are our gods; as the Israelites did to the molten calf made by Aaron; and the stupidity of the one and the other is much alike; this of the Gentiles, and that of the Israelites.

Ver. 18. *Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.*] Jarchi and Kimchi think these words are spoken to Israel, who, as Aben Ezra says, were deaf and blind in heart; but they are rather an exhortation to the Gentiles that remained impenitent and unbelieving, and who were deaf to the voice of the Gospel, and blind as to the knowledge of it; and the purport of the exhortation is, that they would make use of their external hearing and sight, which they had, that they might attain to a spiritual hearing and understanding of divine things; “for faith comes by hearing, and hearing the word of God”, (⁶¹⁰⁷Romans 10:17) to hear the Gospel preached, and to look into the Scriptures, and read the word of God, are the means of attaining light and knowledge in spiritual things; and these are within the compass of natural men, who are internally deaf and blind.

Ver. 19. *Who is blind, but my servant?* &c.] Kimchi, taking the former words to be spoken to the Jews, thinks this is their reply; who will say in answer to it, why do ye call us blind and deaf? who so blind and deaf as Isaiah the prophet, the servant of the Lord, his messenger, and a perfect one as he is called? but as the preceding words are spoken to the Gentiles, here the Lord does as it were correct himself, as if he should say, why do I call the Gentiles blind and deaf, when the people of the Jews, who call themselves my servants, and pretend to serve and worship me, yet there are

none so blind as they in spiritual things? though they have so many opportunities and advantages of light and knowledge, yet shut their eyes wilfully against the light; hence the people and their guides, the Scribes and Pharisees, are often called “blind” by our Lord, to whose times this passage refers, (~~4054~~ Matthew 15:14 23:16-19,24); “or deaf, as my messenger that I sent?” not the Prophet Isaiah, but some other, who did not attend to what he was charged with, and did not perform his office aright; it may design in general the priests and Levites, who were the messengers of the Lord of hosts to instruct the people; and yet these were deaf to the messages that God gave them, and they were to deliver to the people: or it may be rendered, “or deaf, but, or as, to whom I send my messenger”⁸²⁵; or messengers, as the Vulgate Latin version; and so the Targum,

“and sinners to whom I send my prophets;”

and so it may respect the body of the people as before, who were deaf to John the Baptist, the messenger sent before the Lord; to Christ himself, and his ministry, and to his apostles, who were first sent to them:

who is blind, as he that is perfect? who pretended to be so, as the young man who thought he had kept all the commandments, and as Saul before conversion, and all the Pharisees, those self-righteous persons who needed no repentance, and yet who so blind as they? and indeed, had they not been blind to themselves, they could never have thought themselves perfect; and yet when they were told they were so, could not bear it, (~~4020~~ Matthew 19:20 ~~4016~~ Philippians 3:6 ~~4017~~ Luke 15:7 ~~4041~~ John 9:41): and blind, as the Lord’s servant? which is repeated for the further confirmation of it, and more clearly to show whose servant is meant.

Ver. 20. *Seeing many things, but thou observest not, &c.*] The Scribes and Pharisees, saw Christ in the flesh; they saw the miracles he did; they saw the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead raised; yet they did not give note to these things, and keep them in their minds, and regard them as clear proofs of his being the Messiah:

opening the ears, but he heareth not; they heard John Baptist preach, the forerunner of Christ, and the testimony he bore of him; they heard Christ himself and his apostles; they sometimes opened their ears, and seemed to listen and hear with attention, and wonder at what they heard; and some would own, that never man spake like Jesus; and yet understood not his

speech, and hardened their hearts against him; they saw many things with their bodily eyes, but perceived them not with the eyes of their understandings; they heard with their ears, but understood not in their hearts; for their eyes were shut and their ears heavy, (^{<2310>}Isaiah 6:9 ^{<0134>}Matthew 13:14,15).

Ver. 21. *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake*, &c.] This may be either understood of what the Lord had done for these people in time past, and which is mentioned as an aggravation of their stupidity, disobedience, and ingratitude; he had delighted in them, and chose them above all people upon the earth, and distinguished them with his favours, which he did for the sake of his own righteousness or faithfulness to his promises made to their fathers:

he magnified them with the law, and made them honourable^{f826}; gave them a law which made them great and honourable in the esteem of others; (see ^{<6105>}Deuteronomy 10:15 7:6,7 4:6-8) or it may be interpreted of what the Lord would do hereafter, either in a way of grace and favour; that though they were now so ignorant and disobedient, yet in the times of salvation, in the days of the Messiah, these blind shall see, and deaf shall hear, not for their sakes, but for his righteousness sake; when he will magnify his law and make it honourable, and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of him; this way go the Jewish commentators: or rather in a way of judgment, that the Lord would be well pleased in glorifying his justice or righteousness, in the rejection of such a blind and stupid people, who refused to receive the Messiah, against so much light and evidence; and would “magnify the law”, and support the authority of it, and “make it honourable”, by punishing the transgressors of it; but I am inclined to think that this has respect to a remnant among these people, according to the election of grace; or to the Lord’s people in common, whether Jews or Gentiles, with whom he “is well pleased”, or in whom he delights. The Lord is well pleased with his Son, and with him as his servant, as Mediator, for his righteousness sake, as in (^{<2341>}Isaiah 42:1) to which there may be some respect; and he is well pleased with all his people as considered in him; the love he bears to them, is a love of complacency and delight: the choice he has made of them; the things he has laid up for them; the care of their persons in Christ, and salvation by him; the marrying of them to him, and the taking them into his family, show how well pleased he is with them: he delights in them, as they are regenerated and sanctified by his Spirit; the exercise of their graces, and the performance of their duties and services,

are acceptable to him through Christ; his presence with them, the fellowship with himself he grants unto them, the account he makes of them as his jewels, fully demonstrate his well pleasedness in them: but this is not on their own account; for they are polluted and loathsome creatures in themselves, guilty of sin, deserving of wrath; and not for any righteousness of their own, which is imperfect, filthy, and not answerable to the law; which, instead of being made honourable, is dishonoured by it; there is no justification by it, and no acceptance with God through it; but for the sake of the righteousness of Christ, which is perfect, pure, and spotless; which justifies from all sin, and makes comely and beautiful, and glorifies the justice of God, as well as his righteous law, as follows:

he will magnify the law, and make it honourable: that is he for whose righteousness sake God is well pleased: the law of God is great and honourable in itself, from the author, matter, and usefulness of it; and it becomes more so by Christ the Son of God being made under it; by his perfect obedience to it, and by his bearing the penalty of it, in the room and stead of his people; and by holding it forth in his hands, as a rule of walk and conversation to them; by all which it receives more honour and glory than by all the obedience of creatures to it, angels or men, though ever so perfect.

Ver. 22. *But this is a people robbed and spoiled*, &c.] The Jewish people, who shut their eyes against the clear light of the Gospel, and turned a deaf ear to Christ, and to his ministers, rejected him, and persecuted them; these were robbed and plundered by the Roman soldiers of all their riches and treasures, when the city of Jerusalem was taken:

they are all of them snared in holes; such of them as escaped and hid themselves in holes, and caverns, and dens of the earth, were laid in wait for and taken, and dragged out, as beasts are taken in a pit, and with a snare. Josephus^{f827} says, some the Romans killed, some they carried captive, some they searched out lurking in holes underground, and, breaking up the ground, took them out and slew them:

and they are hid in prison houses; being taken by their enemies out of their holes, they were put in prisons, some of them, and there lay confined, out of which they could not deliver themselves:

and they are for a prey, and none delivereth; when they were taken by the Chaldeans, and became a prey to them, in a few years they had a deliverer, Cyrus, but now they have none:

for a spoil, and none saith, restore; there is none to be an advocate for them; no one that asks for their restoration; for almost seventeen hundred years^{f828} they have been in this condition, and yet none of the kings and princes of the earth have issued a proclamation for their return to their own land, as Cyrus did; and no one moves for it, either from among themselves or others.

Ver. 23. *Who among you will give ear to this?* &c.] To this prophecy of your destruction, and to what follows concerning it:

who will hearken and hear for the time to come? and receive instruction from hence, and repent and reform? none at all; so blind, and deaf, and stupid, were they both before, and at their destruction, and even ever since; they take no notice of the hand of God upon them, nor hearken to the rod, any more than to the word of God; which seems to be what is meant by “the time to come”, or “hereafter”; and this will be their case till the veil is taken away, and then they shall see and hear, and turn to the Lord.

Ver. 24. *Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers?* &c.] To the Roman soldiers, to be spoiled and robbed by them? this was not owing to chance and fortune, or to the superior skill and power of the Roman army:

did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? he did, but not without cause; he was justly provoked to it by the sins of the Jews, which were the meritorious and procuring causes of it; yet the Roman army could not have taken their city and plundered it had it not been the will of God, who for their sins, delivered it up to them; even Titus, the Heathen emperor, himself saw the hand of God in it, and acknowledged it;

“God favouring us (says he^{f829}) we have made war; it is God that drew the Jews out of those fortresses; for what could human hands and machines do against such towers?”

for they would not walk in his ways; in Christ, the way, the truth, and the life; nor in the ways of his commandments; or in the ordinances of the Gospel; all which they rejected:

neither were they obedient unto his law; or “doctrine”^{f830}; the doctrine of the Gospel, particularly the doctrine of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ; they went about to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit to his; and also every other doctrine respecting the person, office, and grace of Christ, whom they disbelieved, and refused to receive.

Ver. 25. *Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger*, &c.] The Lord was angry with these people for their rejection of the Messiah, and contempt of his Gospel; and therefore his wrath came upon them to the uttermost, not in some small drops, but in great abundance, to the utter ruin of their nation, city, and temple. Josephus says^{f831},

“the Romans came to subdue Palestine, but their coming was the pouring out of the heat of the wrath of the Lord:”

and the strength of battle; or “war”; all the miseries and calamities that are the effects of war. The Targum is,

“he hath brought upon them the strength of his warriors;”

the Roman soldiers:

and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart; the Roman army set fire first to the lower part of the city of Jerusalem, and then the higher^{f832}, and wholly consumed it; and yet this has not to this day brought this people to lay it to heart, to consider and observe the true reason of it, their rejection of the Messiah.