

CHAPTER 43

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 43

In this chapter the Lord comforts his own people, under their afflictions, with many precious promises; asserts his deity against the idols of the nations; promises deliverance from Babylon, and a greater redemption than that; one branch of which is forgiveness of sin; and closes the chapter with a prediction of the destruction of the Jews by the Romans, for their iniquities. The Lord claims his interest in his people, not only on the foot of creation, but of redemption and calling, and promises them his presence in the midst of afflictions, (^{2381B}Isaiah 43:1,2), puts them in mind of what he had done for them; and assures them of future layouts, as the effect of his unchangeable love to them, (^{2383B}Isaiah 43:3,4) and promises the conversion of their seed and offspring in the several parts of the world, (^{2385B}Isaiah 43:5-7) then challenges the Heathen nations to give such proofs of the deity of their idols as he was capable of giving of his, as his people were witnesses, taken from his eternity and immutability, as the alone Jehovah, and from his omniscience and omnipotence, (^{2387B}Isaiah 43:8-13), after which the destruction of Babylon is prophesied of, and the redemption of his people out of it; which they are encouraged to believe from his being Jehovah, their Sanctifier, Creator, and King; and from what he had done formerly for them, when he brought them out of Egypt, (^{2384A}Isaiah 43:14-17), and which yet was not to be mentioned or remembered, in comparison of what he would do in the world, a new thing, redemption by the Messiah, and the conversion of the Gentiles to the glory of his grace, (^{2388B}Isaiah 43:18-21), the sins of omission and commission the people of God had been guilty of are mentioned, which are freely pardoned for Christ's sake, (^{2382B}Isaiah 43:22-25) when the body and bulk of the Jewish nation were given up to destruction, because of their sins, (^{2386B}Isaiah 43:26-28).

Ver. 1. *But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, &c.*] This prophecy is not concerning Cyrus, and the redemption of the Jews by him, as some have thought; nor of Sennacherib and his army, and of their deliverance from him, as Kimchi and his father interpret it; but of the Christian church, and the state of it, when Jerusalem should be destroyed,

as predicted in the preceding chapter; which goes by the name of Jacob and Israel, for the first churches chiefly consisted of Jews, and both Jews and Gentiles converted are the spiritual Israel of God:

and he that formed thee, O Israel; this creation and formation are not so much to be understood of their being the creatures of God, and the work of his hands, in a natural sense; but of their new creation and regeneration; of their being the spiritual workmanship of God, created in Christ, and formed for his glory:

fear not: for I have redeemed thee: though Jerusalem shall be destroyed, and Judea wasted, and though subject to the persecutions of wicked men in all places; yet since redeemed by Christ from sin, Satan, and the law, hell, and death, nothing is to be feared from either of them; redemption by Christ is an antidote against the fear of any enemy whatsoever:

I have called thee by thy name; with an effectual calling, which is of particular persons, and those by name, even the same that are redeemed by Christ; for whom he has redeemed by his precious blood, they are called by the grace of God to special blessings of grace, with a high, holy, and heavenly calling; and have no reason to fear anything, since they are the chosen of God; have a right to all spiritual blessings; all things work together for their good; they shall persevere to the end, and at last be brought to glory, to which they are called:

thou art mine; such as are redeemed by Christ, and called by his grace, they are his Father's gift, and his own purchase; they voluntarily give up themselves to him, under the influence of his Spirit and grace; they are his by profession and possession; they are his portion, people, sheep, and spouse; and his interest in them, and theirs in him, serve to prevent fear; such need not fear wanting anything, nor any enemy, nor perishing, or miscarrying of heaven and happiness, to which fears they are subject.

Ver. 2. *When thou passest through the waters; I will be with thee, &c.]* The Targum and Jarchi apply this to the Israelites' passage through the waters of the Red sea, as a thing past; and Kimchi to Sennacherib's army, compared to the waters of a river strong and many, (^{2XIV}Isaiah 8:7,8). Jerom says, that the Jewish writers by "waters" would have the Egyptians understood; by the "rivers", the Babylonians; by "fire", the Macedonians; and by the "flame", the Romans; which is not amiss; but rather the

afflictions of God's people in general are meant by waters, as by rivers also, in the next clause:

and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; because of the variety and multitude of them, as persecutions from men, those proud waves that go over them; the temptations of Satan, that enemy who comes in like a flood, and various others; and because of the rapidity and force of them, and their overflowing and overwhelming nature: now there are paths through which the people of God pass: their way lies through them to eternal glory; and though they are of some continuance, yet have an end, as paths have; and having a good guide, and sufficient strength given them, they wade through them safely; for they do not and shall not "overflow" them, so as to cause their faith utterly to fail, or to separate them from the love of God, or so as to destroy them; for though they come nigh them, and upon them, and may greatly affect and distress them, yet shall not hurt them, but turn to their advantage; for their God is with them, to sympathize with them, to comfort and revive them, to teach and instruct them by their afflictions, and to sanctify them to them, as well as to support and bear them up under them, and to deliver out of them:

when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee; afflictions are compared to fire and flames, because very grievous and troublesome to the flesh; and because of the apprehensions of God's wrath in them sometimes; and because of their trying nature; grace is tried by them as gold and silver in the fire; but yet the saints are not consumed by them, they lose nothing but their dross; their principles and profession are tried, and they are supported through all; which has been abundantly verified in the martyrs of Jesus; (see ¹⁹⁶¹²Psalm 66:12 ⁸¹³Zechariah 13:9).

Ver. 3. *For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour,* &c.] The Lord is the covenant God of his people, holy in himself, and the sanctifier of them, and their Saviour in time of trouble; and therefore need no doubt of his presence and support amidst all their afflictions; and besides they should call to mind past experiences of his goodness, to encourage their faith in him, as to present help and assistance:

I gave Egypt for thy ransom; he sacrificed the Egyptians instead of the Israelites; he destroyed the firstborn of Egypt, and saved Israel his firstborn; he drowned the Egyptians in the Red sea, when the Israelites passed safely through it; and the destruction of the former was to make

way for the salvation of the latter, and so said to be a ransom for them; (see ^{<1118>}Proverbs 11:8 21:18):

Ethiopia and Seba for thee; this refers either to the rumour brought to Sennacherib of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia coming against him to war, which diverted him from the siege of Jerusalem for a time, and caused him to turn his forces upon the Ethiopians and Sabeans, whereby the Jews had a respite, (^{<1260>}2 Kings 19:9) or rather to the overthrow of the Ethiopians in the time of Asa, (^{<1449>}2 Chronicles 14:9-13) or to the king of Assyria, perhaps Shalmaneser's being diverted from Palestine and Judea, and turning his forces upon Egypt and Ethiopia, as in (^{<2301>}Isaiah 20:1) and the Lord, by putting his people in mind of these instances, suggests hereby that he will sacrifice all their enemies, rather than they shall be destroyed, and therefore they need not fear.

Ver. 4. *Since thou wast precious in my sight, &c.*] As the saints are; not that they are valuable in themselves; they have no intrinsic worth in them; they are in no wise better than others; they are of the same mass and lump with others; they are of the fallen race of Adam, and are earthly and simple as he was; nor are they precious in their own sight, and much less in the eyes of the world; they are mean and despicable: but they are precious in the sight of God and Christ; in the sight of God the Father, who has chosen them, and taken them into his family, and blessed them with all spiritual blessings; and in the sight of Christ, who desired them, and betrothed them to himself, and undertook for them in eternity, and died for them in time; hence they are compared to things of value, to gold, to jewels, and precious stones, to a pearl of great price, to rich treasure; and are reckoned by Christ as his portion, and are as dear to him as the apple of his eye:

thou hast been honourable; ever since precious, and that was from all eternity; for though they became dishonourable in themselves, through the fall of Adam, and their own transgressions, and are dishonourable in the esteem of men, yet honourable in the esteem of God and Christ; they appear to be so, by their birth, by regeneration, being born of God; by their marriage to the Son of God, the Lord of the whole earth; by their characters of kings and priests unto God; and by their clothing, the robe of righteousness, and garments of salvation clothing of wrought gold; and by their being favoured with the presence of God and Christ, and their nearness to them:

and I have loved thee; which is the source and spring of all; hence they became precious and honourable; this is a past act, an act in eternity; it is an act of complacency and delight; a continued one, God rests in his love; and it is an act of undeserved grace and layout, and unchangeably the same; it never alters:

therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life: as, of old, the Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Sabeans, were given for the people of Israel, as in the preceding verse; so, in New Testament times, the enemies of God's people should be given for them; that is, their enemies should be destroyed, and they should be spared and saved; so that all Jews that rejected Christ, and persecuted his people, were given up to destruction. The Pagan empire was demolished, and so will Rome Papal too be destroyed, and the church of God will be preserved, and his interest revive, and all the kingdoms of the world become his; of which the conversions among the Gentiles in the first ages of Christianity were a pledge, prophesied of in the next words. The Talmudists^{f833}, by "Adam", rendered "man", understand "Edom", by which Rome is often meant in Jewish writings.

Ver. 5. *Fear not, for I am with thee*, &c.] With thy ministers that preach the everlasting Gospel, to make it effectual to the conversion of many everywhere, as well as to bear thee up under all trials, and to cause thee to stand against all opposition:

I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; which is to be understood not literally of the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity; for these several quarters, east, west, north, and south, will hardly agree with that, though it may be supposed they were scattered in several countries; but spiritually of the gathering in of God's elect, whether Jews or Gentiles, which were scattered abroad throughout the world, called the "seed" of the church, because born to her, and brought up in her, and of which she consists; and therefore she herself is said to be gathered, converts being brought in from all quarters; from the "east", even from India, where the Apostle Thomas is said to preach the Gospel, and from other "eastern" countries; and from the "west", from the European nations, good part of which lay west of Judea. Our Lord seems to have respect to this passage in (⁴¹⁸²Matthew 8:12).

Ver. 6. *I will say to the north, give up: and to the south, keep not back*, &c.] That is, give up, and not retain, those that belong to the Lord; here the winds are spoken to by a personification; or the inhabitants of the

northern and southern climates are called upon to deliver up the Lord's people to him, for whose sake the Gospel was sent into these parts, to find them out, and bring them home; by the "north" may be meant the Goths, Swedes, Muscovites, and those northern isles of ours, with others; and by the "south" the Egyptians, Africans, and Ethiopians. Manasseh ben Israel^{f834} thinks the passage is thus expressed, which he supposes refers to the universal gathering of the Jews in the latter day to the holy land; because Media, Persia, and China, lie to the east of it; Tartary and Scythia to the north; the kingdom of the Abyssines to the south; and Europe to the west:

bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; such whom the Lord had predestinated to the adoption of children, and had taken into his family, and whom he regenerated by his Spirit and grace, of either sex; to whom he beareth the strongest love and affection, as a parent to his children; and of whom he takes the utmost care, so that not one shall be lost; let them be in ever so distant a part of the world, he will send his Gospel to them, his ministers after them, and his Spirit shall accompany them, to bring them to himself, his Son, and his churches. Manasseh, before mentioned, understands this of America, and of the Jews there; but may be much better applied to converted Gentiles there; for God has many sons and daughters in those parts.

Ver. 7. *Even everyone that is called by my name,* &c.] That is called by the name of God, a son or daughter of his; or by the name of Christ, a Christian; whoever belongs to the Lord, whom he calls by his name; and who, being called by his grace, call upon his name, make a profession of his name, and serve and worship him:

for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, yea, I have made him; all which is expressive of the power and grace of God, in the regeneration and conversion of his people; which is a creation, a formation, a making them for himself, for the glory of his grace, and to show forth his praise; and therefore he will gather them in, and bring them into a body together, into a church state, that this end may be answered.

Ver. 8. *Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears,* &c.] The Targum applies this to the bringing of the people of Israel out of Egypt; and others understand it of their deliverance from the Babylonish captivity; and some of the exclusion of them from the kingdom of heaven, and casting them into outward darkness, according to

(~~AND~~ Matthew 8:12), but it is rather to be understood of the conviction of them; though better of the Gentiles, and of the enlightening of them, who before were blind; and causing them to hear, who before were deaf to spiritual things, agreeably to what goes before. It seems best to consider the words as a summons to the Heathens uncalled, to the Roman Pagan empire, to come forth and appear, who were as blind and deaf as the idols they worshipped, and plead their cause, agreeably to what follows.

Ver. 9. *Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled, &c.*] In one place, if it could be, in an open court of judicature; that their whole strength might be united together, and the most cogent arguments any of them are able to produce might be brought out; and that all might have an opportunity of hearing the cause fairly argued, and the point decided, and judge for themselves on which side truth lies:

who among them can declare this, and show us former things? what god or prophet of theirs can declare any future event, such as this, the redemption of the Jews by Cyrus, foretold from the mouth of the Lord by Isaiah, so long before the accomplishment of it, or anything whatever before it comes to pass? for this does not regard things past, which might be shown and declared; but the things they are challenged with are things future, to declare them first, before they come into being, which would be a proof of deity; for none but God, who is omniscient, can foretell future events with certainty:

let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified; let them produce witnesses that their gods spoke of things before they came to pass, and that they came to pass just as they foretold they would; that their cause may appear a just one, and that they, their worshippers, are right in serving them:

let them hear, and say, it is truth; or let them hearken to the evidence against them, and acknowledge that what I say is true, and that I am the true God, and there is no other.

Ver. 10. *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, &c.*] The people of Israel, who could testify that the Lord had foretold their affliction in Egypt, their coming from thence, and settling in the land of Canaan, many hundreds of years before they came to pass, and which were exactly fulfilled; and so the apostles of Christ, and ministers of the word, and all Christian people in all nations, are witnesses of the prophecies concerning Christ, his birth,

miracles, obedience, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension to heaven, and session at the right hand of God, all which are exactly accomplished, (~~408~~ Acts 1:8):

and my servant whom I have chosen; meaning either the Prophet Isaiah, or the prophets in general; or rather the Messiah. So the Targum,

“and my servant the Messiah, in whom I am well pleased;”

and who is called the faithful witness, (~~405~~ Revelation 1:5 3:14), and to whom the characters of a servant, and the Lord’s chosen, well agree, (~~240~~ Isaiah 42:1):

that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he; by which testimonies and evident proofs of deity, from the prediction of future events, and the accomplishment of them, you may have a competent knowledge, a firm persuasion, and a clear perception of this important truth, that the God of Israel, and of all true Christians, is the one only Lord God:

before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me; intimating that idols were formed by the hands of men, and yet none of these were formed before him, and therefore could make no pretensions to deity, or to an equality with him; nor should any be formed afterwards, that could be put in competition with him. In short, the sense is, there is no other god beside him; as the Targum, Septuagint, and Arabic versions render it.

Ver. 11. *I, even I, am the Lord*, &c.] Jehovah, the self-existing, eternal, and immutable Being; this is doubled for the confirmation of it, and to exclude all others:

and besides me there is no Saviour; either in a temporal or spiritual sense; the gods of the Heathens could not save them out of their present troubles, and much less save them with an everlasting salvation; none but God can do this, and this is a proof that Christ is God, since none but God can be a Saviour.

Ver. 12. *I have declared, and I have saved, and I have showed*, &c.] The Targum is,

“I have showed to Abraham your father what should come to pass; I redeemed you out of Egypt, as I swore to him between the pieces; and I caused you to hear the doctrine of the law at Sinai.”

But the sense is, that God had declared by his prophets, long before the Messiah came, that he would send him; that he should come and save his people by his obedience, sufferings, and death; accordingly he was come, and was the author of salvation; the Lord had wrought out salvation by him, as he had declared he would; and this he had shown, published, and made known by the everlasting Gospel, preached among all nations:

when there was no strange god among you; that assisted in this salvation; the arm of Christ alone wrought it out: or, “and this is not strange among you”^{f835}; this work of salvation wrought out is not strange among you; it is well known unto you, being published in the Gospel.

Ver. 13. *Yea, before the day was I am he*, &c.] Before there was a day, before the first day of the creation; that is, before time was, or from all eternity, I am he that resolved upon and contrived this method of saving men; “and ever since that day was”^{f836}, as it may be rendered, I am he that have spoken of it by all the prophets, from the beginning of the world, and now it is accomplished:

and there is none can deliver out of my hand: either such whom the Lord determines to punish, or such whom he resolves to save; none can snatch them out of his hands, there they are safe:

I will work, and who shall let it? as when he wrought the work of creation, there was no opposition to it, or hinderance of him; and in providence all things are done as he pleases; so all his purposes and decrees, which are his works within him, are exactly accomplished according to his pleasure, and none can resist his will. The work of redemption is finished just according to the draught of it in his eternal mind; and when he works upon the heart of a sinner at conversion, whatever obstructions and difficulties are in the way, these are removed, and the work is begun, and carried on, and performed, until the day of Christ. The work of the Lord in his churches, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world, in a more visible and glorious manner, shall be done, and none will be able to hinder it:

who can turn it back? either his work, or his hand in working; his purposes cannot be disannulled; his power cannot be controlled; his work cannot be

made void, or of no effect; he always succeeds, for he has no superior that can obstruct him.

Ver. 14. *Thus saith the Lord, your Redeemer, &c.]* That redeemed Israel out of Egypt, and would redeem the Jews from Babylon in a short time, and be the author of a greater redemption to his people than either of these, even a spiritual and eternal one:

the Holy One of Israel; (see ^{380B} Isaiah 43:3), holy in himself, holiness to Israel, and faithful to his promises:

for your sake I have sent to Babylon: Cyrus and his army to take it, in order to deliver the Jews from their captivity in it. The Targum wrongly paraphrases it to the sense quite contrary,

“for your sins have I carried you captive unto Babylon:”

and have brought down all their nobles; from their seats of honour and glory, stripped them of all their grandeur and dignity, and reduced them to a low and mean estate. This is to be understood of the princes and nobles of Babylon, who fell with the city, as their king did: or, “their bars”^{f837}; for what bars are to houses and cities, that princes should be to the people, the defence and protection of them. Though some think this refers to the gates of Babylon, and the strong bars of them now broken; (see ^{380D} Isaiah 45:2). The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions render it “fugitives”; and which some understand of the Jews, who were as such in Babylon, but now should be brought out of it; which sense is countenanced by the above versions, which render it, I will raise up, bring, or bring back, “all the fugitives”^{f838}; others of the Chaldeans, who should be forced to fly upon the taking of their city; but the first sense seems best, which distinguishes them from the common people in the next clause:

and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in their ships; who used to glory in their shipping they had in the river Euphrates, as the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions render it; and so the Targum calls their ships, “ships of their praise”; where, and of which, they used to make their ovations and triumphs; and the word^{f839} used has the signification of shouting for joy: or rather, “whose cry is to the ships”^{f840}; as it might be, when they found Cyrus and his army had got into the city, then their cry was, to the ships, to the ships, that lay in the river hard by, in order to make their escape; or their cry was, when they were “in” the ships, even in a way of lamentation and distress, because they could not get them off, Cyrus having drained the

river; or it refers to their cry, when put aboard the ships that belonged to the Medes and Persians, in order to the transporting them into other countries. Such a howling there will be when mystical Babylon is destroyed, (^{f6817}Revelation 18:17-19).

Ver. 15. *I am the Lord, your Holy One, &c.*] And therefore need not doubt of the performance of those promises:

the Creator of Israel, your King; and therefore both able and willing to protect them.

Ver. 16. *Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, &c.*] Who did make a way in the Red sea, when he led Israel through it as on dry land; this, with what follows, is observed to encourage the faith of the Lord's people in the performance of what he had promised, to bring them out of Babylon; for he that had done this, and the rest that are mentioned, could easily remove all difficulties that lay in the way of their deliverance:

and a path in the mighty waters; either of the Red sea, or it may be of Jordan; through which the Israelites passed into the land of Canaan.

Ver. 17. *Which bringeth forth the chariot and the horse, the army and the power, &c.*] Who brought forth the chariots and horses, and the mighty army of Pharaoh, out of Egypt, to pursue the Israelites into the Red sea, where they were drowned. The present tense is put for the future, as in the preceding verse; the future is put for the past tense in the next clause:

they shall lie down together, they shall not rise; they lay down in the Red sea, where they sunk to the bottom, and perished, and never rose more, at least to life, nor never will, till the general resurrection:

they are extinct, they are quenched as tow; or flax, or as the wick of a candle^{f841}, when put into water, is quenched at once; so the Egyptian, became extinct in the Red sea. Some observe an allusion to the commodity of flax, for which Egypt was famous. Kimchi interprets the whole of the army of Sennacherib, which was brought out of their own land to Jerusalem, and was destroyed in one night by an angel. Aben Ezra of the Chaldeans being brought out to fight with the Persians. But others rather of the army of the Medes and Persians being brought against them, by whom they became extinct as tow or flax.

Ver. 18. *Remember ye not the former things*, &c.] Just now referred to, the bringing of Israel out of Egypt, and through the Red sea, and the drowning of Pharaoh and his army in it; for though these things were worthy to be remembered with thankfulness and praise, and to the glory of God, and for the encouragement of faith, yet not in comparison of what was hereafter to be done; meaning, not the redemption from Babylon, unless as a type of spiritual and eternal redemption by Christ; for otherwise there were greater and more wonderful things done, when Israel were brought out of Egypt, than when they were brought out of Babylon; but the great salvation by the Messiah, which exceeds both the deliverances out of Egypt and Babylon, is meant:

neither consider the things of old; unless as figures of the new, but not to be put upon a foot with them, much less to the undervaluing of them, and indeed to be forgotten in comparison of them; (see ^{<2437>}Jeremiah 23:7,8). The Talmudists^{f842}, by the “former” things, understand subjection to kingdoms; and, by the “things of old”, the going out of Egypt; as they do by the “new thing”, in the following verse, the war of Gog and Magog.

Ver. 19. *Behold, I will do a new thing*, &c.] A wonderful and unheard of thing, and therefore introduced with a “behold”, as a note of admiration; the same with the new thing created in the earth, (^{<2492>}Jeremiah 31:22), the incarnation of the Son of God; who took flesh of a virgin, appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was made sin and a curse for his people, in order to obtain eternal redemption for them; which blessing, though not newly thought of, resolved on, contrived, and agreed upon, that being from eternity; nor newly made known, or as to the virtue and efficacy of it, which had been from the beginning of the world, yet new as to the impetration of it by the blood and sacrifice of Christ; and may be also called “new”, because excellent, it being of a spiritual nature, complete and eternal, and having so many valuable blessings in it, as justification, pardon, and eternal life:

now it shall spring forth; or bud forth as a branch, in a very short time, suddenly, and at once; one of the Messiah’s names is that of the Branch; (see ^{<3088>}Zechariah 3:8 6:12):

shall ye not know it? the Redeemer, and the redemption by him. It was known to them that looked for it, and to whom the Gospel is sent, and the Spirit reveals and applies it; these know the nature of it, own it to be of God, and know their interest in it, and know the author of it, in whom they

have believed, by the characters given of him: and as this may have respect to the redemption of Christ, so to the conversion of the Gentiles, and to the grace of God dispensed through Christ to them; when old things passed away, and all things became new; a new covenant of grace was exhibited, a new church state set up, new ordinances appointed, and a new people called to partake of all this, on whom was a new face of things; and wonderful and excellent things were done for them, as follows:

I will even make a way in the wilderness; as there was a way made for the Israelites through the wilderness, which lay between Egypt and Canaan; and through another, which lay between Babylon and Judea; so the Lord would also make a way in the Gentile world, comparable to a wilderness for its barrenness and unfruitfulness, for the Gospel to enter into it, where it should run, and be glorified; where Christ, the way of salvation, should be made known; and where there should be a way for Christians to walk together, in the fellowship of the Gospel:

and rivers in the desert; the doctrines of the Gospel, and the ordinances of it, which should be preached and administered in the Gentile world, before like a desert; and the graces of the Spirit, which should be brought into the hearts of men by means of them; and the large communications of grace from Christ; and the discoveries of the love of God, with the blessings of it; compared to rivers for their abundance, and for the comforting, reviving, and fructifying nature of them.

Ver. 20. *The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons, and the owls, &c.*] Which is not to be understood literally of these creatures, who as they had honoured the Lord, when Israel passed through the wilderness, so would again in their way praise the Lord, when they came through the deserts from Babylon, for giving them water to drink in such dry and thirsty places, to which there may be an allusion; but spiritually of the Gentiles, compared to those creatures for the savageness, fierceness, and stupidity of them, and who were reckoned by the Jews no other than as the beasts of the field; who should honour and glorify God for the Gospel brought unto them, and for his grace and mercy bestowed on them:

because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert; as before; (see Gill on “²³³⁹ Isaiah 43:19”); because of the plenty of divine grace, and the means of it:

to give drink to my people, my chosen; to refresh and comfort the hearts of his people, whom he had chosen out from among the Gentiles, and now would call them by his grace, and set them a thirsting after Christ, and salvation by him.

Ver. 21. *This people have I formed for myself*, &c.] The Gentiles, compared to a desert and wilderness, wild and uncultivated, distinguished from Jacob and Israel in the next verse, and the same with the chosen people before mentioned; who being chosen of God, and redeemed by Christ, are formed anew by the Spirit of Christ, made new creatures, regenerated, and transformed by the renewing of their minds, and conformed to the image of Christ, and having him formed in their souls, and principles of grace and holiness wrought in them; in consequence of which they reformed in their lives and conversation, and were also formed into a Gospel church state, and all this done by the Lord for himself, his service, and his glory. The Targum is,

“this people have I prepared for my worship:”

they shall show forth my praise; with their lips, by ascribing their formation to the power and grace of God, and even their whole salvation to it, and express their thankfulness for the same; and likewise by their actions, by a subjection to the ordinances of the Gospel, and by their lives and conversations being agreeably to it. Joseph Kimchi, as Abendana observes, interprets this people of the beasts of the field, spoken of in the preceding verse, that should honour the Lord, and here said to be formed for himself, and should show forth his praise; and which is taken notice of to aggravate the sins of the people of the Jews, who called not on the Lord, &c. as in the following verses; so the ants and conies are called a people not strong, and the locusts a people great and strong, ([◀]Proverbs 30:25,26 [▶]Joel 2:2).

Ver. 22. *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob*, &c.] The Jews, though they were the posterity of Jacob, a praying person, yet did not tread in his steps, but were more like the Heathens that called not on the name of the Lord; though there is no necessity of restraining this to prayer, it may regard the whole worship of God, which is sometimes included in the invocation of his name; and so the Targum,

“and ye come not to my worship, O ye of the house of Jacob.”

The Jews, in Christ's time, did not call upon his name, nor believe in him, nor receive his Gospel, nor submit to him and his ordinances; they rejected him and his service, therefore the Lord rejected them, and called the Gentiles, as before prophesied of:

but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel: of the word, worship, and ordinances of God; (see ^{<3013>}Malachi 1:13 ^{<3085>}Amos 8:5).

Ver. 23. *Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings,* &c.] The kids and the lambs, which, according to the law, should have been brought for burnt offerings daily, morning and evening; and much less did they bring the larger cattle of burnt offerings, as oxen and bullocks. The Targum and Vulgate Latin render it, "the rams of thy burnt offerings"; the Septuagint version, "the sheep"; and the Syriac and Arabic versions, "the lambs"; and these were not brought to him, but to their idols; or, however, were not brought in a right way and manner, and from right principles, and with right views. Kimchi thinks this refers to the times of Ahaz, when the service of God ceased in the temple, and idolatry was practised at Jerusalem but it seems to respect later times, nearer the times of Christ; (see ^{<3013>}Malachi 1:13,14 ^{<3078>}3:7,8):

neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices; what sacrifices they did offer were not offered to God, but to their idols; or they were such as were not according to the law of God; or they were not offered up in the faith of the Messiah, nor with a true spirit of devotion, and with a sincere view to the glory of God, and in the exercise of repentance for sins; but rather as an atonement for them, and that they might go on in them with ease of mind; (see ^{<2011>}Isaiah 1:11-15):

I have not caused thee to serve with an offering; the "minchah", a meat offering or bread offering, which was a freewill offering, and they were not obliged to it; it was at their own option whether they would bring it or not, and which was not very chargeable to them:

nor wearied thee with incense; or frankincense, which was put upon the meat or bread offering; (see ^{<0011>}Leviticus 2:1). Some understand this of all offerings in general, that they were not so many that were commanded them, as to be a burden to them; nor so expensive but that they were able to bear the charge of them, considering the fruitfulness of the land of Canaan, and especially the numerous and costly sacrifices of Heathen idolaters: and others think it has reference to the time of Israel's coming

out of Egypt, and the covenant of God with them, when no mention was made of sacrifices, nor were they enjoined them, (^{2472b}Jeremiah 7:21,22).

Ver. 24. *Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, &c.]* Or “calamus”^{f843}, which was used in the anointing oil, and for the perfume or incense, (^{4210b}Exodus 30:7,23), this they thought too expensive, and so left it out of the composition, or neglected the whole this being put a part for the whole. Jarchi gives it as the sense, that they had no need to buy it, since it grew in great plenty in the land of Israel, which he took to be cinnamon; though this is distinguished from calamus, or the sweet cane, (²⁷¹⁴Song of Solomon 4:14), wherefore Kimchi much better observes, that it was not to be had in the land of Israel, but came from a land afar off; and therefore must be bought; (see ³¹⁶¹Jeremiah 6:20), hence grudging to give the price for it, and to be at the expense of it, bought it not, and disused it:

neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; they did not multiply their sacrifices, offered only just what the law required, if so many, and those of the leaner sort; and whereas the fat of the sacrifices was the Lord’s, there was little of it for him in these:

but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities; they were so many, and so aggravated, that he could not bear with them any longer, his patience was worn out; they were an uneasiness to him, as it were a burden upon him, and therefore would ease himself, as he sometimes does, by avenging himself, (^{2312a}Isaiah 1:24), but here by pardoning them, as in the following verse. Some think that these are the words of Christ, the surety of his people, who took upon him the form of a servant for the sake of them, and had all their sins laid upon him, and which he bore, and made satisfaction for; and were to the human nature a burden, and a weariness to it; (see ¹⁹¹²Psalms 40:12). This must be understood of the remnant according to the election of grace, among these people so sadly corrupted, for whose sins of omission and commission Christ made atonement; and upon the foot of his satisfaction, remission of sins proceeds, as in the next verse: this they thought too chargeable, and so left it out of the composition, or neglected the whole this being put a part for the whole. Jarchi gives it as the sense, that they had no need to buy it, since it grew in great plenty in the land of Israel, which he took to be cinnamon; though this is distinguished from calamus, or the sweet cane, (²⁷¹⁴Song of Solomon 4:14), wherefore Kimchi much better observes, that it was not to be had in the land of Israel, but came from a land afar off; and

therefore must be bought; (see ^{246D}Jeremiah 6:20), hence grudging to give the price for it, and to be at the expense of it, bought it not, and disused it:

neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; they did not multiply their sacrifices, offered only just what the law required, if so many, and those of the leaner sort; and whereas the fat of the sacrifices was the Lord's, there was little of it for him in these:

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Ver. 25. *I, even I am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, &c.*] The same with "sins" in the next clause; original sin, and actual sins; which are transgressions of the law of God, of which the law accuses, for which it pronounces guilty, curses, and condemns; which are contrary to the nature of God, strike at his deity, and must be abominable to him; they are many, yea infinite, and yet all pardoned for Christ's sake; which is here expressed by a "blotting" them out, in allusion to the blotting of a debt book: sins are debts, and these are many, and which cannot be paid by the sinner; Christ has made full payment; as the surety of his people: upon this the debt book is crossed; these debts are remitted for his sake: or as a cloud is blotted out, dispelled by the wind, or scattered by the sun; (see ^{2342D}Isaiah 44:22), so as to be seen no more with the eye of avenging justice, or to be charged against the sinner to his condemnation. The author of this blessing of grace is the Lord, "I, even I am he"; who had been so ill used, and maltreated, as before declared; whose law had been broken in such a manner; and who is the Lawgiver that is able to save and to destroy; and who hates and abhors sin, and is strictly just; and yet, notwithstanding all

this, forgives it; and which he repeats for the confirmation of it, and seems to express it with the utmost pleasure, and as glorying in it, and as if it was an honour to him, and a jewel in his crown; and indeed it is his sole prerogative; none can forgive sins but him: and this he does for his own sake; it is not procured by anything of the creature; not by riches, nor by righteousness, nor by repentance, nor by faith, nor by obedience to any ordinance; it is not for the sake of these that the Lord forgives sin, but for his own sake, and his Son's sake, which is the same; it is an instance of unmerited and distinguishing grace; it flows from the free grace of God; it is a branch of the covenant of grace; it is through the blood of Christ, and yet according to the riches of grace; and it is for the glory of all the divine perfections, justice, truth, and faithfulness, as well as grace and mercy; and after such a list of sins of omission and commission, to hear such language as this is surprising grace indeed!

and will not remember thy sins; God forgives and forgets; God will not remember the sins of his people against them; having forgiven them, he will never punish them for them, which is meant by remembering them; (see ~~3440~~ Jeremiah 14:10 ~~6685~~ Revelation 18:5).

Ver. 26. *Put me in remembrance*, &c.] Of this gracious promise of free remission of sins, and of all others of the same kind; not that God ever forgets any of his promises, but he may sometimes seem to do so; wherefore he would have his people put him in mind of them, that he may by his good Spirit make a comfortable application of them to him: "let us plead together"; or come together in judgment, as God and the sinner may upon the foot of remission of sin, through the blood, sacrifice, and satisfaction of Christ; which may be pleaded, and will be allowed, in the court of justice: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified; declare the promise before made; declare the grace that is expressed in it; plead the blood and righteousness of my Son, that thou mayest be justified by it, on which account remission of sin is: or it may be rather, these words are directed to another set of men among the Jews, who rejected the doctrine of forgiveness of sin by the grace of God, through the blood of Christ; such as were the Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's time, those self-justiciaries, who sought to be justified by the works of the law; setting at nought the grace of God and righteousness of Christ: now these the Lord calls upon in a way of derision, to put him in mind of any of their good actions they had done, and he had forgotten, for the sake of which they expected pardon, and not for his name's sake; and to come into open court and plead their

own righteousness, and see whether they could carry their cause upon the foot of their own merits; and declare publicly what these merits and good works were, that they might be justified by them, if they were sufficient for such a purpose; but alas! these would not bear examination at the bar of strict justice, and would be far from justifying them in, the sight of God; and as their own works would be insufficient, it would be a vain thing to have recourse to the works and merits of their forefathers; for it follows,

Ver. 27. *Thy first father hath sinned*, &c.] Either Adam, as Kimchi, in whom all have sinned, and from whom all derive a sinful and corrupt nature; or Abraham, as Jarchi, the father of the Jewish nation, of whom they boasted, and in whom they trusted, as being of his seed, and through whose merits and worthiness they expected great things; yet he was but a sinful man, though a good man, and a great believer; of whose infirmity and frailty many instances are on record. Some have thought Terah the father of Abraham is designed, who was an idolater; others think some particular king is meant, the father of his people; Aben Ezra supposes Jeroboam to be intended, the first king of the ten tribes who made Israel to sin; but Kimchi observes, it is better to understand it of Saul, who was the first king over all Israel; others interpret it of Ahaz; and others of Manasseh; Vitringa of Uriah the priest, in the times of Ahaz; but it seems best to take the singular for the plural, as the Arabic version does, which renders it, “your first fathers have sinned”; all their forefathers had sinned, from their coming out of Egypt to that day; and, therefore it was in vain to have respect to them, or plead any worthiness of theirs in their favour; besides, they imitated them in their sins, and were filling up the measure of their iniquities:

and thy teachers have transgressed against me; or “interpreters”^{f844}; of the law to the people, the Priests and Levites, Scribes and Pharisees; such who should have taught the people, and instructed them in the knowledge of divine things, and interceded with God for them; these were transgressors of the law themselves, as well as despisers of the Gospel; these rejected the counsel of God against themselves, disbelieved the Messiah, and dissuaded the people from receiving him; they were “orators”^{f845}, as the word is by some rendered; and they used all the oratory they were masters of against Christ, and to persuade the people into an ill opinion of him, and at last to insist upon his crucifixion.

Ver. 28. *Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, &c.*] Or will do it; the past tense for the future, common in prophetic writings; these are not Moses and Aaron, or the kings, but the priests of the temple, who had the care and government of things there, and therefore called “princes”; these, when this prophecy was fulfilled, were treated as common persons, and divested of their office, and laid aside; their priesthood and the honour of it were taken from them; sacrifices were abolished, and the law concerning them; this was more especially true when Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple burnt, and the daily sacrifice made to cease, by the Romans:

and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches; to be cursed and reproached, as the Jews are in all places to this day, wherever they be, and that very righteously, and in just retaliation for their behaviour to Christ, and their usage of his followers; for they both hung him upon the accursed tree, and imprecated his blood on them and their children, and anathematized, or delivered to an anathema^{f846}, as the word here used signifies, and cast those who professed his name out of their synagogues, as well as reproached and blasphemed him, his person, offices, miracles, and doctrines; and therefore have been justly given up to the curse of God and man, and to be a taunt, proverb, and byword throughout the world, (~~2B1D~~ Jeremiah 24:9).