

CHAPTER 44

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 44

In this chapter the Lord comforts his people with the promise of the effusion of his Spirit, and the blessings of his grace upon them; the consequence of which would be fruitfulness in them, and the conversion of others, who should profess themselves the Lord's people, (²³⁴⁰Isaiah 44:1-5), he proves his deity in opposition to all false gods from his eternity, omniscience, and foretelling future events, (²³⁴⁶Isaiah 44:6-8), exposes the stupidity of idol makers and the worshippers of them, (²³⁴⁹Isaiah 44:9-20), makes gracious promises of the remembrance of his people, the remission of their sins, and their redemption by Christ, (²³⁴²Isaiah 44:21-23), of which redemption from Babylon was a type; and of that assurance is given, from the Lord's creating all things by his power; from his frustrating and infatuating diviners and wise men; from his fulfilling his predictions delivered by his prophets; and from his mentioning by name the instrument of their redemption, Cyrus, (²³⁴⁸Isaiah 44:24-28), which makes way for a particular prophecy concerning him in the next chapter.

Ver. 1. *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant, &c.*] These words are directed to a remnant according to the election of grace among the Jews, about the time when their princes should be profaned, and the body of the people should be given to curse and reproaches; and who are distinguished from them by the title of the Lord's "servants": who, being called by grace, were made willing to serve him in righteousness and holiness, either by preaching his Gospel, and so had the title of the servants of the most high God, which show unto men the way of salvation; or by observing his commands and ordinances, and walking agreeably to his will, serving him acceptably with reverence and godly fear; as they are also, in the next clause, distinguished from the rest by their being "chosen" of God: and these, having ears to hear, are called upon to hearken to what the Lord had to say unto them; for, notwithstanding the sorrowful things delivered out in the latter part of the preceding chapter, threatening destruction to the nation of the Jews; yet he had some comfortable things to say to this

remnant, and therefore would now have them hear them, and attend unto them for their use and comfort:

and Israel whom I have chosen; an Israel out of Israel; a seed the Lord had reserved for himself, whom he had chosen in Christ before the world was; to be holy and happy, to grace here and glory hereafter, to believe in him, and profess his name, and to serve him in their day and generation, either in a more public, or in a more private way; chosen vessels they were to bear his name, and show forth his praise. What they were to hear and hearken to is as follows,

Ver. 2. *Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb*, &c.] Which is not to be understood of the forming of the people of Israel into a commonwealth or church state, for this is not said of the body of them; nor of the natural creation and formation of these individuals, but of their new creation, regeneration, and spiritual formation; which, as it was owing to the grace and power of God, by which the Lord describes himself, who is speaking to them, the consideration of it might serve to encourage their faith and confidence in the performance of the promises about to be made to them; (see ^{<890B>}Psalm 100:3 ^{<8015>}Galatians 1:15 4:19): which “will help thee”; in the exercise of grace, in the performance of duty, in suffering for his name’s sake in every time of trouble, and out of all trouble, and that right early, and when none else can:

fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and thou Jesurun, whom I have chosen; the titles are as before, only instead of “Israel” is “Jesurun”, which is a name of the people of Israel, (^{<8915>}Deuteronomy 32:15 33:5) and here the Targum instead of it puts Israel; and so the Syriac and Arabic versions. The Septuagint version renders it, “beloved Israel”; the word signifies upright; and so the Vulgate Latin version translates it, “O thou most upright one”^{f847}; and well agrees with this little remnant of Israelites indeed, in whom there was no guile. Some derive the word from one that signifies to “see”, “behold”, “contemplate”^{f848}; and so it may be rendered, “the seeing ones whom I have chosen”, such whose eyes the Lord opened to see their own vileness and sinfulness, and the glory of Christ and salvation by him: these are bid not to fear: not any of their enemies, though they themselves were but worms; and though their number was small, and they weak and feeble, and their enemies numerous, strong, and mighty; and though their countrymen would reproach, revile, and persecute them for Christ’s sake, and they should be obliged to turn to the Gentiles, and carry the Gospel

among them, when those of their nation would reject it, which would issue in the ruin of it, as before predicted; (see ^{<2410>}Isaiah 41:10,13,14 43:1,2).

Ver. 3. *For I will pour water oh him that is thirsty, &c.*] Or rather upon the thirsty land, as the Targum; and so the Syriac version, “in a thirsty place”; as a dry land is a thirsty land; it thirsts for water, gapes and opens for it: (see ^{<1970>}Psalm 63:1) “and floods upon the dry ground”; large quantities of rain to moisten it, and make it fruitful; these figurative expressions are explained in the next clauses:

I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; by which “seed” and “offspring” are meant the spiritual seed of this remnant or little church of Christ among the Jews, in the first times of the Gospel: such as should be regenerated and converted in it, and who are signified by the “dry” and “thirsty” ground; for being made sensible of their desolate condition, their barrenness and unfruitfulness, they hungered and thirsted after righteousness; were desirous of Christ and his grace, and more knowledge of him, and eagerly sought after them; and to these are promised the Spirit, and his gifts and graces, compared to water, for its purifying, softening, fructifying, and refreshing nature, and for extinguishing thirst, and giving a real pleasure and delight; (see ^{<3305>}Ezekiel 36:25 ^{<3375>}John 3:5) and the abundance thereof is signified by “floods” of water; for in first conversion especially, there is an abounding, yea a superabounding of the grace of God; it is a well of living water; yea, out of the believer flow rivers of living water, (^{<3044>}John 4:14 7:37,38 ^{<3150>}Romans 5:20 ^{<5014>}1 Timothy 1:14) and this grace of the Spirit is always a blessing: and indeed all the blessings of grace go along with it, as to the manifestation and application of them as justification, pardon of sin, adoption, &c.; here perhaps a more special regard is had to the extraordinary effusion of the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles of Christ being furnished with his gifts and graces, were fitted to go forth with the “fullness of the blessing” of the Gospel of Christ. The Targum of the whole is,

“for as waters are given upon the thirsty land, and they flow upon the dry land, so will I give my Holy Spirit on thy children, and my blessing upon thy children’s children;”

a succession of converts in the Christian church.

Ver. 4. *And they shall spring up as among the grass, &c.*] That is, such on whom the Spirit of the Lord shall be poured with his gifts and grace, and with the blessings of it: by the “grass” may be meant common believers, comparable to green grass, for their numbers, being many; for their weakness in themselves; for their flourishing condition; like grass for its greenness, and verdure, and its springing up by clear shining after rain; (see ^{47/16}Psalm 72:6,16) and by those that “spring up among them” are intended the apostles and ministers of the word, who exceed common Christians in their gifts, and grace, and usefulness; grow up higher and taller than they, like palm trees and cedars in Lebanon; and as such exceed private saints as tall trees exceed the grass they grow among:

as willows by the water courses; a sort of trees well known, and which delight in watery places, and grow best on banks of rivers, and shoot up apace in a very short time, and spread their branches; so the apostles, after the effusion of the Spirit on them, grew quickly in gifts, and grace, and evangelic knowledge; and their usefulness spread far and near. The Targum is,

“the righteous shall grow tender and delicate as the flowers of the grass, as a tree that sends forth its roots by flows of water.”

Ver. 5. *One shall say, I am the Lord's, &c.*] This expresses the success of the apostles' ministry, not only among the Jews, but more especially among the Gentiles, who were not called by the name of Jacob and Israel; but now should call themselves by those names, as the following clauses show, being called by grace and converted; when they should openly profess their faith in Christ, claim their interest in him, and acknowledge his property in them, and not be ashamed of the name of Christians; and this one, and another, even many should do. The Lord has a people who are his special and peculiar people, his beloved ones, the objects of his delight and pleasure, his chosen and covenant ones, his adopted ones, his treasure and his jewels; and hence he has taken such care of them; he has put them into the hands of Christ for their security; given him to be a Head, Redeemer, and Saviour of them; bestows every blessing of grace on them; will not suffer any to hurt them; and keeps them by his power: and having given them to Christ, they are his people, his portion, his spouse and bride, his children, and the sheep of his hand; hence he became incarnate on their account; laid down his life to save them; sends his Gospel, and along with it his Spirit effectually to call them; and hence all that he has is theirs, and

he will keep them, and not lose any of them: and being called by grace, they are the workmanship of the Spirit; his temples in which he dwells, and in whom he is as the earnest and pledge of their eternal glory: and this interest the Lord has in his people may be known by them, so as that they may be able to say, one and another, "I am the Lord's", as many of them have done; (see ¹⁸⁹¹Psalm 119:94 ²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 2:16 ⁴⁷⁷³Acts 27:23), they may know they are the Lord's beloved ones, by his drawing them with his love, by the communications of his grace to them, by the communion with himself he indulges them with, and by what he shows unto them, and by the shedding abroad of his love in them; and that they are his chosen ones, by the Gospel coming in power to them, by their effectual calling, by the sanctification of the Spirit, and their faith in Christ Jesus; and that they are his covenant ones, by the application of covenant grace and blessings to them; and that they are his adopted ones, by the Spirit of adoption sent down into their hearts, witnessing it unto them; they may know that they are the redeemed of the Lamb, by their having his Spirit, and by his being formed in their hearts: and they may know that they are the temples of the Holy Ghost, by his own work upon them, and his dwelling in them: and knowing this, they should and will declare, and say they are the Lord's and none other's; that they are not their own, nor Satan's, nor the servants of men, but the Lord's to whom they devote themselves, and whom they desire to serve; and therefore join themselves to his churches, and walk in his ordinances, publicly confessing their faith in him, which is telling all the world whose they are; and this they say with the utmost joy and pleasure, in an exulting, yea, even boasting way and manner. The Targum is,

"this shall say, I am of them that fear the Lord:"

and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; reckon himself of the posterity of Jacob, in a spiritual sense; count it an honour to be called a wrestling Jacob, and a prevailing Israelite; so the Targum,

"this shall pray in the name of Jacob;"

either in the name of the God of Jacob, the Messiah, or as Jacob did: "and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord": shall give his hand and seal to serve the Lord; shall esteem it his high and great privilege to be written among the living in Jerusalem and to have his name registered among the saints, and in their church book. The Targum is,

“and this shall offer his oblation before the Lord;”

himself and his sacrifices of prayer and praise: “and surname himself by the name of Israel”: shall value himself upon this, that he is an Israelite indeed, and shall choose no other name to be called by than that of a Christian. The Targum is,

“in the name of Israel; he shall draw near;”

and worship with them; all these phrases are expressive of a sincere and hearty profession of faith in Christ, and of the Christian religion, in terms borrowed from the people of Israel; (see ~~44B4~~Acts 2:41,47 5:14 ~~40B5~~2 Corinthians 8:5).

Ver. 6. *Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel*, &c.] The King of the whole world, and Governor among the nations; and in a peculiar manner King of Israel, that nation being a theocracy; and especially King of spiritual Israel, or King of saints, be they of what nation they will:

and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts; who redeemed Israel out of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and would again redeem them from the Babylonish captivity, and the whole Israel of God from sin, Satan, and the law; which he was able to do, being “the Lord of hosts”, of the armies above and below:

I am the first, and I am the last; the first cause and last end, of all things in nature, and providence, and grace; all things are of him, through him, and from him; all things were made by him in creation, and for his pleasure they are and were created; and all things are disposed of in his providence for his own glory; and he is the first in reconciliation, justification, and salvation, and all are to the glory of his grace: or this is a periphrasis of his eternity, who is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning or end, the Alpha and Omega; the same is said of Christ, (~~40B3~~Revelation 1:8,11,17), and all the other characters before mentioned agree with him:

and besides me there is no God: all others are only gods by name, not by nature, mere nominal fictitious deities, not real ones; and it is to the exclusion of these from the rank of deity, these words are said; but not to the exclusion of the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit, who, with the Father, are the one true God.

Ver. 7. *And who as I shall call*, &c.] Which of the idols of the Gentiles can do as the king of Israel, the Lord of hosts has done? call things that are not, as though they were? call all creatures into being? call men by their names before they were born, as Isaac; Josiah, and Cyrus, of whom mention is made in the latter end of this chapter, and call them to service and usefulness in their day and generation? and call whom he pleases by his grace to eternal glory?

and shall declare it; the end from the beginning, things future that are yet to come to pass; or the purposes and decrees of God, his counsel and covenant, his mind and will?

and set it in order for me; give an exact and orderly account of things that shall be throughout the successive ages of time; as Jehovah did with respect to the people of Israel, whose God and king he was; he foretold to Abraham their going into Egypt, and bondage there, their deliverance from thence, and settlement in the land of Canaan, and now their deliverance from Babylon, and by name who should be the instrument of it; none of the gods of the Gentiles could do this, or anything like it, or order and dispose all occurrences in providence for his own glory, and the good of men:

since I appointed the ancient people? meaning either the ancient patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their posterity, the children of Israel, who were early formed into a body politic, and into a church state; (see ^{<4316>}Deuteronomy 32:6-8), or rather the first man, and the first race of men that inhabited the world before the flood, called the old world; and so the sense is, who ever did the things I have done, from the time I made man, and other creatures, and placed them on the earth, or from the creation of the world? so Aben Ezra, Jarchi, and Kimchi interpret it; though it is best of all to understand this of the people of God, the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, in the Lamb's book of life, from the foundation of the world; who are, as the words may be rendered, "the people of eternity"^{>f849}; and may be so called, because they were in some sense a people that were "from eternity", as the Targum paraphrases it; not that they had an actual personal being so early, for they are but creatures of time, raised up in successive generations, and but of yesterday, and of a short continuance; yet they had from all eternity a representative being in Christ, as their federal head; they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, and had grace given them in him before the world began, (^{<4003>}Ephesians 1:3,4 ^{<5009>}2 Timothy 1:9) they were

the people of God taken into covenant by him from everlasting, for so early was the covenant of grace made with Christ, and them in him; they stood so early related to God as his children, and to Christ as his spouse and bride; so early were they on the thoughts of God, and on his heart, and in his affections, as they were also upon Christ's, and in his hands, and their names so early registered in his book of life; so that they may be said to be indeed an "ancient people", or "a people of eternity"; and they may be called so, because they will continue for ever, as the days of heaven, and as the sun and moon, before the Lord, (~~1982~~ Psalm 89:29,35), everlasting habitations are provided for them, and they shall be for ever with the Lord; so the Syriac version renders it, "a people for eternity": now these are appointed by the Lord to come into actual being at the time, and in the place he has fixed; they are appointed to many things in life; not unto wrath, either here or hereafter, but to afflictions, and to death itself: and they are appointed to many good things, to be called by grace, to be saved with an everlasting salvation, and to reign with Christ in the New Jerusalem state; (see ~~2323~~ Isaiah 24:23) where they are called "ancients", as here; and to be glorified with Christ for ever; it follows:

and the things that are coming, and shall come? let them show unto them:

let the idols show to their worshippers if they can, "the things that are coming"; just coming, that are near at hand, that will be tomorrow; and that "shall come", are at a greater distance, which will be in ages to come; or wonderful things, and things future, so Jarchi interprets it; a word^{f850} like the first being used for signs and wonders. God foretells wonderful things that shall come to pass, and which accordingly do; but the idols of the Gentiles can do nothing of this kind.

Ver. 8. *Fear ye not, neither be afraid,* &c.] Of the accomplishment of prophecies and promises, and of professing the true God, and of adhering to Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer and Saviour; or of the gods of the Heathens, and of persecuting tyrants, and what they can do against you, and in favour of their idolatrous religion:

have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? what should come to pass, before it did, even everything that has since the appointment of the ancient people; and particularly what troubles and persecutions the apostles, ministers of the word, the first Christians should meet with among the Heathens, for professing and propagating the Gospel, and what success they should meet with, which came to pass accordingly:

ye are even my witnesses; as especially the apostles were, who had it from Christ's own mouth, that they should be hated and persecuted for the sake of the Gospel, and should be successful wherever they came; as they also were his witnesses in Jerusalem, and Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth, of his person, doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, (^{<4008>}Acts 1:8):

is there a God besides me? that is a true God; for there were many fictitious and false deities, but none omniscient and omnipotent, that could foretell future events, and accomplish them as he did; there is no god but the one God, Father, Son, and Spirit; for this an appeal is made to the witnesses:

yea, there is no God, I know not any; or, there is "no rock"^{f851}; or, is there any? a word used for God, (^{<46304>}Deuteronomy 32:4,18,30,31), there is no rock to build upon for salvation, no rock for shelter and safety, but Christ the rock of ages, on which the church is built, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, (^{<4068>}Matthew 16:18), and if God, who is omniscient, knows none else, there can be no other.

Ver. 9. *They that make a graven image are all of them vanity, &c.]* They show themselves to be vain men, by making such vain things as graven images are; both images, makers, and worshippers of them are all vain, yea vanity itself:

and their delectable things shall not profit; their idols made of gold and silver, or covered with them, and adorned with precious stones, and so delightful and desirable, are of no manner of profit and advantage, unless the matter they are made of, and the ornaments about them, were converted to other uses; yet not as gods, and worshipped as such, who can be of no service to their worshippers to help them in distress, or save them from ruin:

and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know that they may be ashamed; they that made them must be witnesses against themselves, and the idols they have made; they must be convicted in their own consciences that they cannot be gods; they must be sensible that they have no sight nor knowledge of persons and things; that they cannot see, nor know their worshippers, nor their wants, and cannot give them relief; and this they ought to acknowledge to their own shame that made them, and that their worshippers of them might be ashamed also.

Ver. 10. *Who hath formed a god, &c.*] Who ever made one? was such a thing ever known? or can that be a god which is made or formed? who so mad, foolish and sottish, as to imagine he has made a god? or is it possible for a creature to be the maker of a god? or any so stupid as to fancy he had made one? yet such there were, so void of understanding and reason, and even common sense: “or molten a graven image”: first melted it, and cast it into a mould, and then graved and polished it, and called it a god?

that is profitable for nothing? or seeing it “is profitable for nothing”, as a god; cannot see the persons, nor hear the prayers, nor relieve the distresses of those that worship it; and therefore it must be great folly indeed to make an image for such a purpose, which answers no end.

Ver. 11. *Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed, &c.*] Either such who join with them in the worship of the molten graven image, or god formed, when they find it is profitable for nothing; so the Targum,

“behold all their worshippers shall be confounded;”

or their fellow workmen, who took their several parts in making the image, and so must be conscious of the vanity and unprofitableness of it, and ashamed when upbraided with it:

and the workmen they are of men; or, “of Adam”^{f852}; they are the sons of Adam, fallen men, sinful, frail, mortal creatures; they are not so much as of the angels in heaven, but of men on earth, and so very unfit to be makers of a god:

let them be gathered together; workmen and worshippers, as Demetrius, and the craftsmen or shrine makers, with others at Ephesus:

let them stand up; and plead for their gods, and say all they can in the behalf of them:

yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together; the light of the Gospel breaking forth in the ministry of the apostles and others, the minds of many were enlightened to see the folly of worshipping idols, which brought them, and the makers of them, into contempt; who not being able to withstand the evidence and force of arguments brought against them, were covered with shame, and filled with fear, lest, should the Gospel still get further ground, their trade of idol making would come to nothing; or

lest the vengeance of heaven should fall upon them for their idolatrous practices.

Ver. 12. *The smith with the tongs*, &c.] Or, “the worker of iron”^{f853}; the blacksmith, who had a concern in making of idols, for some were made of iron, (^{208B}Daniel 5:4), or in making plates to cover them, or nails to fasten them with, or instruments which the carpenter made use of in cutting down trees, and fitting the wood for an image; such as the axe or hatchet, or plane, and which some think is here meant, by the word translated “tongs”, but is rendered an “axe”, (^{240B}Jeremiah 10:3) and is used for that, or an hatchet, or a plane, by the Misnic^{f854} writers; so the Targum renders it,

“the smith out of iron makes an axe or hatchet:”

“both worketh in the coals”; he puts his iron in the coals, and blows upon them, and so makes it soft and malleable, and then takes it out:

and fashioneth it with hammers: beats it with hammers upon the anvil, and puts it into what form he pleases:

and worketh it with the strength of his arms; uses his utmost strength to bring it into a form he is desirous of:

yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint; he works at it with all his might and main, is earnest at it, and is eagerly desirous of finishing his work; he works till he is hungry and thirsty, and for want of food is ready to faint and sink; and yet will not give himself time to eat and drink, being so intent upon his work: or the sense is, though he is hungry and thirsty, and faints for want of provisions, yet the god he is making, or has made, cannot supply him with any: this is said to expose the folly of idol making, and of idol worship.

Ver. 13. *The carpenter stretcheth out his rule*, &c.] Or, the worker of trees^{f855}; that works in wood, or makes images of wood; having cut down a tree, he stretches out his rule or line upon it, and takes the dimensions of it, and measures the length and the breadth of it, as much as is for his purpose to make a god of: and then

he maketh it out with a line; coloured with ochre, or chalk, which leaves a mark, by which he knows where to cut it, and fashion it to his mind:

and he fitteth it with planes; first with the rougher planes, which take off the knotty and more rugged parts; and then with a smoother plane, makes it even, and polishes it:

and he marketh it out with a compass; where its head and body, and legs and arms, and other parts must be:

and maketh it after the figure of a man; with all the parts and proportion of a man:

according to the beauty of a man; with the face and countenance of a man; with all the lineaments and just symmetry of a man; in the most comely and beautiful manner he is capable of, that it may be the more striking and pleasing to the worshippers of it. Jarchi's note is,

“this is a woman, who is the glory of her husband;”

and so the Targum,

“according to the praise of a woman;”

there being female deities, as Juno, Venus, Diana, and others:

that it may remain in the house^{f856}; either in the temple built for it, whither its rotaries repair to the worship of it; or in the dwelling house, being one of the Lares or Penates, household gods: it may be, this is said by way of scorn and contempt; this god being made, is set up in the house, from whence it cannot stir nor move, to the help of any of its worshippers.

Ver. 14. *He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak,* &c.] To make gods of, trees both pleasant and durable, but all unfruitful:

which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest; taking a great deal of pains in seeking out such trees as were most fit for his use, and a great deal of care in the growth of them, that they might answer his end, as well as exerting his strength in cutting of them down:

he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it; a tree that soon grows up, and which he plants for the purpose to make a god of; and this being watered and nourished with rain, which God vouchsafes, though designed for an idolatrous use, grows, and is fit for what it was intended; and being so, he cuts it down, and, makes an image of it; which shows his folly and madness, that a tree of his own planting, which he has seen the growth of, and yet be so sottish as to imagine that a god may be made of it.

The word for “rain” signifies a body in the Syriac^{f857} language, as Kimchi observes, and for which he produces (^{<2043>}Daniel 4:33), and so Aben Ezra says it signifies in the Arabic language^{f858}; and the sense is, “the body” of the tree “grew up”, and being grown up, was cut down, and used as follows.

Ver. 15. *Then shall it be for a man to burn, &c.*] And which indeed is the proper use of it, but not all that this man puts it to; only the boughs, and what he cuts off as useless to his purpose, and the chips he makes, which he commits to the fire:

for he will take thereof, and warm himself; with some part of it he makes a fire in his parlour, and warms himself when it is cold weather:

yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; he heats his oven with another part of it, and bakes the bread he has made for himself and family to live on, and which is putting it to a good use:

yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh a graven image, and falleth down thereto; the other part of the tree, and which is the better part, he makes an image of, and carves it, and calls it a god; and not only so, but when he has done, falls down and worships it; than which there cannot be a greater instance of stupidity and folly.

Ver. 16. *He burneth part thereof in the fire, &c.*] To warm himself with, as before:

with part thereof he eateth flesh; that is, with part of it he dresses flesh, and makes it fit to eat; unless the meaning is, with part of it he makes tables and trenchers to eat meat off of; but the former sense seems most likely, and agrees with what follows:

he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; he roasts his meat with it, and eats it when roasted, and is highly pleased and delighted with it, and he eats of it to his satisfaction:

yea, he warmeth him, and saith, Aha; an expression of joy and delight, being before a good fire in winter time:

I am warm, I have seen the fire; have felt it, and enjoyed the comfort of it, which has given a sensible pleasure.

Ver. 17. *And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image, &c.]* What remains of the tree, that is not consumed by making a fire to warm with, by heating the oven to bake bread with, and by using it in the kitchen to roast meat with, this is made an image of, and being graven and carved, is called a god, and worshipped; though it is of the same matter, and of the same nature, with that which was used for warming, baking, and roasting:

he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, deliver me, for thou art my god; he bows unto it, falls down on his knees, and spreads out his hands, and lifts them up, and uses all the gestures of adoration; yea, makes a formal address in prayer and supplication, and particularly requests that he would deliver him from present danger and distresses, of whatsoever kind he was attended with; declaring at the same time he was his god, in whom he trusted, and from whom he expected relief and help. Monstrous stupidity!

Ver. 18. *They have not known nor understood, &c.]* Who the true God is, nor the worship that is due to him alone; they do not know nor understand divine and spiritual things; nay, they have not the knowledge and understanding of men; they want common sense that can do and say such things as before mentioned, both idol makers and idol worshippers:

for he hath shut their eyes that they cannot see, and their heart that they cannot understand; either the devil, as some think, the god of this world, that blinds their eyes from seeing the folly of such gross idolatry, which he, deceiving them, leads them into; or rather God himself, who, because they like not to retain him in their knowledge, gives them up to a reprobate and injudicious mind, to believe a lie, and worship a false god; this he permits, orders, and overrules to some good ends and purposes: this is to be understood of the eyes of the understanding, which, as the word^{f859} signifies, are “daubed” and plastered over, that there is no opening of them, and seeing with them; which is the judicial blindness and hardness of heart, which God sometimes in righteous judgment gives up men unto; (see ~~4128~~ Romans 1:28).

Ver. 19. *And none considereth in his heart, &c.]* Or, “and he does not return it to his heart”^{f860}; he does not come to himself again, or return to his right mind, but lives and dies under the infatuation; never once revolving it in his mind, pondering within himself what he has done, or is doing, whether right or wrong:

neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say; within himself, and reason the matter in his own mind, and thus express himself:

I have burnt part of it in the fire; to warm myself with:

yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; both heated the oven, and baked bread with it; and also upon the live coals have laid kneaded dough, and baked a cake on them:

and I have roasted flesh, and eaten it; made a fire with another part of it, and roasted meat at it, and ate it with great pleasure and satisfaction:

and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? an idol, which is an abominable thing to God, and to all men of sense and goodness:

shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? or “the bud of a tree?”^{f861} or that which is made out of a tree of my own planting, cutting down, and hewing, part of which has been used to the above purposes; and the remaining lifeless log, shall I worship it as a god? and yet, though such reasoning might be justly expected from a man that is a reasonable creature, sottish are idolaters, that they seem to be quite deprived of their rational powers, or at least these are disused by them.

Ver. 20. *He feedeth of ashes, &c.*] That is, the idolater delights in his idol, pleases himself with seeks comfort and satisfaction from it, fills and feeds himself with hopes and expectations of being helped and delivered by it; but this is all vain hope, a mere delusion; it is as if a man fed on ashes instead of food; it is feeding on that which has no savour nor substance, can yield no nourishment, but, on the contrary, is pernicious and hurtful; and it is like Ephraim’s feeding on wind, (~~3111~~ Hosea 12:1) or on chaff instead of wheat, (~~2138~~ Jeremiah 23:28) and so such who feed upon and delight themselves in sinful lusts, or false doctrines, may be said to feed on the same sort of food: and here it may be true of the idol in a literal sense; part of the wood of which it was made being reduced to ashes, to which some respect may be had, (~~23415~~ Isaiah 44:15,16), and that itself was capable of the same fate. The Targum is,

“behold his god, part of it is ashes;”

so the Vulgate Latin version: “a deceived heart hath turned him aside” from the true God, and the right worship of him, unto idolatry; the heart of man is deceitful, and desperately wicked; a man needs no other to entice

him, and draw him away into any sin, and from the living God, than his own evil heart; which, being deceived itself, deceives him, and leads him to the commission of such things as are contrary to reason and common sense: and he is so infatuated with them, and possessed with a strong belief of them,

that he cannot deliver his soul: divest himself of his erroneous and wicked principles, and leave his idolatrous practices, or be persuaded that he is in the wrong:

nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand? that the idol, which his right hand has made, is a lie, a mere vanity, not to be depended upon and trusted in: or which is in, or “at his right hand”^{f862}; and worshipped by him, and is highly esteemed and loved as his right hand; this he cannot be persuaded to believe, and say that it is a falsehood and a work of errors; such is the force and fascination of idolatry, when once persons are ensnared and entangled with it.

Ver. 21. *Remember these, O Jacob, O Israel, &c.*] Remember these persons, these idolaters before spoken of; or these things, the gross idolatries they were guilty of, and loath and abhor them, shun and avoid them, and not imitate them, and do the same things: or remember that this was formerly your case, and admire the distinguishing grace of God, in turning you from idols to serve him: for by Jacob and Israel may be meant the spiritual Israel of God, or those from among the Gentiles called by the grace of God, and incorporated into Christian churches; (see ^{244B}Isaiah 44:5):

for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: and therefore should serve the Lord, and him only, and not idols, for no man can serve two masters; moreover, these were formed by the Spirit and grace of God in regeneration for his service, and therefore ought cheerfully to engage therein, and abide in it, and never serve any other:

O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me; such as remember the Lord, and remember to serve him, he will remember, and not forget them, his love to them, his covenant with them, and the promises he has made them; he will not forget their persons, nor their service, their work and labour of love, which they have showed to his name. The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, render it, “do not forget me”; and so the Targum paraphrases it,

“do not forget my fears;”

to fear, serve, and worship the Lord, and him only; but Aben Ezra and Kimchi observe, it should be rendered as it is by our translators.

Ver. 22. *I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins, &c.*] Sins and transgressions are compared to clouds, for the number of them, they being many as the fleeting clouds of the air; and for the nature and quality of them: as clouds are vapours rising out of the earth and sea, so these arise out of the earthly and corrupt heart of man, which is as a troubled sea; and, like the clouds, they reach up to the heavens, and the cry of them calls aloud for vengeance from thence; they cause darkness, even all that darkness, both in unregeneracy, and after conversion; they intercept the light of God’s countenance, and interpose between God and the souls of men, and cause him to hide his face from them; they come between them and the sun of righteousness, and cover him out of their sight; and by means of them the light and comfort of the Holy Spirit are withdrawn; and they hinder the free passage of prayer to God, at least as to the apprehension of God’s people; (see ^{289D}Isaiah 59:2 ^{289H}Lamentations 3:44), and they portend a storm, and threaten with a tempest of divine wrath and vengeance; but God graciously forgives them; which is meant by “blotting” them out. Clouds are blotted out either by the wind dissipating and scattering them; or by the sun breaking through them, conquering and dispersing them, which perhaps is alluded to here; and designs not the satisfaction of Christ for sin; by which he has finished and made an end of it; but rather God’s act of pardon upon it, and the application of it to his people; or the discoveries of it by Christ himself, the sun of righteousness, arising upon them with healing in his wings, that is, with pardon to their souls; saying to them, thy sins, though many, are forgiven thee; and they are so blotted out and removed as to be seen no more, and as if they had never been, as a cloud is; not only no more seen by the avenging eye of divine justice, but so removed from them as not to be seen by them, as to have no more conscience of them, or feel the load and burden of them; and though other clouds or sins may arise, yet these also are blotted out in the same way, and shall never appear against the saints to their condemnation. And as, when clouds are blotted out, there is a clear sky, a serene heaven, the sun shines in its brightness, and everything is pleasant and delightful; so when sin is pardoned, or it appears to be so, then God is beheld as the God of all grace, as all grace and love; the sinner can go with a holy boldness to him, through the blood of Christ, as being

pardoned, and has fellowship with him; the evidences of interest in Christ become clear, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost are enjoyed. And let it be observed, that as no man can reach the clouds, and blot any of them out; so none can forgive sins but God, this is his sole prerogative, (²³⁴²⁵Isaiah 43:25). Here is mention made of a cloud, and a thick cloud; no clouds are so thick but God can blot them out, and these are no sins so great but he can forgive them; clouds, and thick clouds, are blotted out, lesser and greater sins are forgiven by him. Some read the words thus, “I have blotted out”, wiped or washed away, “as with a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as with a cloud thy sins”^{f863}; and give the sense thus, as clouds pouring down with rain wash the streets from the filth of them, so the Lord, as with a deluge of pardoning grace and mercy, washes away the sins of his people; grace superabounds abounding sin, and carries it all before it, and removes it clear away; now this blessing of grace is mentioned, to attach the people of God to his service, as it follows:

return unto me, for I have redeemed thee; this supposes them to have backslidden from the Lord in heart or in practice, in life and conversation, or in both, and yet the Lord had forgiven them; and which was a reason why they should return to him by repentance; as nothing is a greater motive to it, or more strongly influences it, than a discovery of pardoning grace; and then the people of God do return to God as their Father, who graciously receives them, and to Christ as their husband, to whom they are married, though backslidden, and to their duty to both. So the Targum,

“return to my worship or service;”

the reason or argument enforcing it is very strong, “for I have redeemed thee”; from sin, and all its sad effects; from the law, and the curses of it; and from death and hell, and wrath to come; and therefore need not fear any of these things, or fear coming to the Lord on account of them. Such, who are redeemed, need not doubt but they shall be kindly received, though they have backslidden, and that no good thing will be withheld from them; for if God has given his Son to redeem them, he will give all things freely with him; besides, being redeemed, they are the Lord’s, and therefore ought to return to him, and glorify him with their bodies and spirits, which are his; and as they are redeemed from our vain conversation, they should return from it, and not indulge one, or otherwise the end of redemption is not answered: and this being joined with the forgiveness of sin in the preceding clause, shows that that proceeds upon the foot of

redemption, or upon the foot of satisfaction made by Christ; and both furnish out arguments engaging to the service of God.

Ver. 23. *Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it, &c.*] Done what he promised, the forgiveness of the sins of his people, and the redemption of them. So the Targum,

“because the Lord hath wrought redemption for his people.”

The Vulgate Latin version adds, “mercy”^{f864}; and so the Septuagint version, “because God hath had mercy on Israel”^{f865}; and therefore the heavens are called upon to sing on this occasion, as the angels of heaven did when the Redeemer was born, and who rejoice at the salvation of God’s elect, (⁴⁰²³Luke 2:13,14 15:10):

shout, ye lower parts of the earth; the earth, which is low in comparison of the heavens; the inhabitants of it, especially the Gentiles, which dwelt in the lower parts of the world, in comparison of Judea, which lay high:

break forth into singing, ye mountains; kings and great men of the earth, like the strong and lofty mountains:

O forest, and every tree therein; the multitude of the common people; (see ²³⁰⁸Isaiah 10:18,19) these are called upon to express their joy, for the following reason:

for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel; which is to be understood not merely of their redemption from the Babylonish captivity, but of the redemption by Christ, which the former was a type of, and in which all God’s people in all nations are concerned, and therefore have reason to rejoice; and in which all the divine perfections are glorified, not only the wisdom, power, goodness, grace, and mercy of God, but his holiness and justice; and saints not only have reason to rejoice, because they are redeemed from sin and Satan, and the law, and death and hell, and all spiritual enemies, but because the glory of God is great in their salvation.

Ver. 24. *Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, &c.*] These are the words of the Son of God, of Christ, the Redeemer of his people; and the following show him to be the mighty God, and so able to redeem them, and therefore was appointed to this work, and undertook it:

and he that formed thee from the womb; that formed thee in it, and brought thee out of it, separated thee from it, and called thee by his grace:

I am the Lord that maketh all things; that made all things out of nothing at first; for without Christ was not anything made that was made; all things in heaven, and earth, and sea, were made by him; and he continues all creatures in their being, and provides for them, and governs all by his power; he works hitherto, and continues working with his divine Father, (<FOOT>John 1:1-3 5:17):

that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; not to the exclusion of the Father and the Holy Spirit, but of all creatures, angels and men; of himself, and by his own strength and power, and, without the help of these, he stretched out the vast space of the heavens as a curtain, and spread out the earth in its length and breadth, and the large surface of it, to that great circumference which it has; a full proof of his proper deity! A man cannot stretch out a curtain, or piece of tapestry, of any size, without the help of another; and much less can a creature stretch out the heavens and the earth.

Ver. 25. *That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, &c.*] Struck dumb the oracles of the Heathens, disappointed their lying priests, and made void all the signs and tokens they gave the people, that such and such things would come to pass, which did not, and which proved them to be liars:

and maketh diviners mad; soothsayers, astrologers, and such sort of persons, who pretended to foretell future events; but these not answering to their predictions, they became mad, because their credit was ruined, and they lost their reward:

that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolishness; the wise philosophers among the Gentiles, and their schemes of philosophy, which were confounded and destroyed, and proved foolish, through the ministration of the Gospel, (<FOOT>1 Corinthians 1:20,27 3:19).

Ver. 26. *That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers, &c.*] Who, as he confirmed the word of Isaiah and other prophets, and fulfilled their predictions concerning the captivity of the Jews, and their deliverance from it; so he has confirmed and established the word preached by his servants, the Gospel, which is the counsel of God, delivered out by his messengers, the apostles, and first preachers of it; it being attended with the demonstration of the spirit, and

of power, to the conversion of sinners, and to the destruction of idolatry and Pagan worship. By the Lord's "servant" some understand Moses, as Jarchi; others Isaiah, as Kimchi and most interpreters; and why not Paul, as Cocceius? though the singular seems rather to be put for the plural, as the next clause explains it; and so the Arabic version renders it, "his servants"; to which the Targum agrees, paraphrasing it,

"confirming the words of his servants the righteous:"

that saith to Jerusalem, thou shalt be inhabited, and to the cities of Judah, ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof; all which suppose that Jerusalem, which, in the prophet's time, was full of inhabitants, should be emptied of them, by the sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity; yet, nevertheless, there should be a return of the Jews from captivity, and this city should be peopled and inhabited again; and also, that the cities of Judah, which were now in good circumstances, should be laid waste, and all the adjacent country be in a ruinous condition, all which should be rebuilt and restored to a flourishing state again. The Lord had said it, and it should be done; as accordingly it was. This may be understood, in a spiritual sense, of the building up of the church of God, and the setting up and establishing the interest of Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel.

Ver. 27. *That saith to the deep, be dry, &c.]* The Targum is,

"that saith to Babylon, be desolate;"

and most interpreters, Jewish and Christian, understand it of Babylon, which was situated in a watery place, by rivers of water, particularly the river Euphrates, and in a low valley:

and I will dry up thy rivers; some think the allusion is to the stratagem of Cyrus, made use of, under a divine direction, to drain the river Euphrates, and make it passable for his army; by which means he surprised the city of Babylon, and took it: though others think it refers to the drying up of the Red sea and the river Jordan, which are proofs of what God can do, and a periphrasis of his power.

Ver. 28. *That saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, &c.]* Or Coresh, as his name in the Hebrew language is; and in the Persian tongue signifies the "sun"; from whence he had his name, as Ctesias^{f866} and Plutarch^{f867} say; to which the Hebrew word "cheres", which signifies the "sun", has some

affinity; though Joseph Scaliger^{f868} would have the name of Cyrus to signify “food” in the Persian language, and which answers to his character as a shepherd. The father of this illustrious person was Cambyses, king of Persia; his mother’s name was Mandane, daughter of Astyages, king of Media^{f869}. This prophecy, concerning him, was nearly two hundred years before he was born. Josephus says^{f870}, that Cyrus read this prophecy himself, which Isaiah had delivered out two hundred and ten years before; and which is a proof both of God’s prescience of future contingencies, and of the truth of divine revelation. The Lord honours him with the title and character of his “shepherd”, who was to lead his flock, the people of Israel, out of the Babylonish captivity, and guide them into their own land. It is very usual, both in sacred and profane writings, for kings to be called shepherds; and if Cyrus signifies “food”, as before observed, his name and office agree. Justin^{f871} says, he had this name given him, while he was among the shepherds, by whom he was brought up, having been exposed in his infancy. Cyrus himself compares a king to a shepherd, and observes a likeness between them^{f872}:

and shall perform all my pleasure; concerning the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon, and the encouragement of them to go up to their own land, and rebuild their city and temple; and many other things which he did, agreeably to the secret will of God, though he knew it not; and what he did he did not do in obedience to his will, but as overruled by the power and providence of God:

even saying to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built; these are not the words of the Lord, as before, but of Cyrus, giving orders that Jerusalem should be built:

and to the temple, thy foundation shall be laid; with great propriety this is said, since only the foundation was laid in his time; the Jews being discouraged and hindered by their enemies from going on with the building in his reign, until the times of Darius, king of Persia. (see ^{<1500>}Ezra 1:1-3 3:10 4:1-5).