

CHAPTER 49

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 49

This is a prophecy concerning Christ, and redemption by him; and of the enlargement of the church in the latter day, by the conversion of Jews and Gentiles; which the isles, and people afar off, are exhorted to listen and hearken to, delivered out by the prophet, in the person of Christ; who gives an account of his call to his office, and the time of it; of what the Lord did for him, and said unto him, (^{2340E}Isaiah 49:1-3), then follows a complaint of his labouring in vain, and a correction of it, (^{2340F}Isaiah 49:4) and a further declaration of his call and appointment to office, and of each of the parts of the work assigned him, with encouragement to it, (^{2340G}Isaiah 49:5,6). Christ is again represented under discouraging circumstances, as despised of men, abhorred by the nation, and a servant of rulers; who is encouraged by divine promises that kings should rise up before him, and worship him; that God would be faithful to his promise to him, and yet choose him, hear and help him, at a proper time; preserve him, and give him for a covenant to the people, to the establishment of the earth, and making it habitable, (^{2340H}Isaiah 49:7,8) for the release of prisoners, and feeding, leading, and guiding them, and removing all difficulties out of the way, (^{2340I}Isaiah 49:9-11) when the calling of the Gentiles is foretold, which would occasion great joy in the world, (^{2340J}Isaiah 49:12,13) yet the church is introduced as complaining that she was forsaken of God, (^{2340K}Isaiah 49:14) which is denied, and the contrary affirmed; being dear to the Lord as a sucking child to its mother, and more so; never forgotten by him, and always under his care, (^{2340L}Isaiah 49:16), and, for her comfort, she is assured that those who had destroyed and made her waste should be removed; and that she should have converts that would be an ornament to her, and these numerous, insomuch that the place of their habitation would be too strait and narrow, and which would be matter of astonishment to her, (^{2340M}Isaiah 49:17-21) and, besides those that would be converted in the land of Judea, there would be great numbers in the Gentile world converted by the power of God accompanying his Gospel, set up as a standard there, kings and queens countenancing and encouraging the interest of Christ, (^{2340N}Isaiah 49:22,23) and yet still it is questioned whether the church should be

delivered from her oppressors, (^{2342b}Isaiah 49:24) to which it is answered, that she should be delivered, and her persecutors destroyed; by which it would be known that the Lord is the Redeemer and Saviour of his people, (^{2342c}Isaiah 49:25,26).

Ver. 1. *Listen, O isles, unto me, &c.*] These are not the words of Cyrus, as Lyra mentions; nor of the Prophet Isaiah, as Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and other Jewish writers think; but of Christ, calling upon the inhabitants of the isles to hearken to him; by whom are meant the inhabitants of islands properly so called, as ours of Great Britain, and may be chiefly designed, being a place where the Gospel of Christ came early, and has been long; or all such that dwell in countries beyond the sea, it being usual with the Jews to call all such countries isles that were beyond sea to them; Christ is the great Prophet of his church, and is alone to be hearkened unto, and in all things, (^{417b}Matthew 17:5 ^{580b}Hebrews 3:7):

and hearken, ye people, from far; that were afar off from the land of Judea, as well as afar off from God and Christ, and the knowledge of him, and of righteousness and salvation by him; the Gentile nations are meant; (see ^{417d}Ephesians 2:12,13), for this is to be understood of kingdoms afar off, as the Targum paraphrases it; and not of distant and future things, to be accomplished hereafter, as Aben Ezra; taking this to be the subject they are required to hearken to, and not as descriptive of persons that are to hearken:

the Lord hath called me from the womb; to the office of a Mediator; to be Prophet, Priest, and King; to be the Saviour and Redeemer of men; he did not assume this to himself, but was called of God his Father, (^{580b}Hebrews 5:4,5,10), and that not only from the womb of his mother Mary, or as soon as he was conceived and born of her; but from the womb of eternity, from the womb of eternal purposes and decrees; for he was set forth, or foreordained in the purposes of God, to be the propitiation for sin; and was predestinated to be the Redeemer before the foundation of the world, even before he had a being in this world as man. So the Targum,

“the Lord, before I was, appointed me;”

he prepared a body for him, and appointed him to be his salvation. The Syriac version join, the words “from far” to this clause, as do the Septuagint and Arabic versions, contrary to the accents, and renders them,

“of a long time the Lord hath called me, from the womb”; even from eternity:

from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name; Jarchi interprets this of Isaiah, whose name was fixed and given him by the Lord, while he was in his mother’s bowels, signifying that he should prophesy of salvation and comfort; but it is much better to understand it of Christ, whose name Jesus, a Saviour, was made mention of by the Lord, while he was in his mother’s womb, and before he was born, (^{<4012>}Matthew 1:20,21 ^{<4031>}Luke 1:31,35 2:10,11), for the words may be rendered, “before the womb, and before the bowels of my mother”^{f963}; that is, before he was in them.

Ver. 2. *And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword*, &c.] Or,

“he hath put his words in my mouth as a sharp sword,”

as the Targum; namely, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and is sharper than a twoedged sword, and is said to come out of the mouth of Christ, (^{<4037>}Ephesians 6:17 ^{<3042>}Hebrews 4:12 ^{<4016>}Revelation 1:16), with which he pierces into and cuts the hearts of men, and lays open all their sin and unrighteousness, and cuts down the worst and best in men, and slays all his enemies; so his mouth was as a sharp sword in the days of his flesh, to inveigh against the sins and to refute the errors of the Scribes and Pharisees; as it will be, in the latter day, to smite the nations of the earth, (^{<4015>}Revelation 19:15,21): “in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me”; in his counsels and purposes of old, and in his providence;

“in the shadow of his power hath he protected me,”

as the Targum; thus he hid, and protected him from Herod’s cruelty in his infancy; and from the rage and malice of the Scribes and Pharisees, who sought often to lay hands on him, and take away his life before his time. The Jews talk very much of the Messiah’s being hid under the throne of glory. Aben Ezra’s remark, that the phrase, “he hath hid me”, answers to the scabbard of a sword, before mentioned, is not amiss:

and made me a polished shaft; or, “choice arrow”^{f964}; which being polished at the point, or well oiled, and shining, pierces the deeper, So the doctrines of Christ, the words of his mouth, are compared to bright and sharp arrows, which make cutting work, and give great pain where they come; as they sometimes do like arrows, swiftly, suddenly, and with great force and

power, (⁴⁹⁸Psalm 45:5). Kimchi observes, that he speaks of a sharp sword with respect to the Jews that were near, where a sword could reach them; and of a polished shaft or arrow with respect to the Gentiles afar off, which must be cast after them:

in his quiver hath he hid me, meaning his secret purposes, and his powerful protection, as before; which he compares to a quiver, a case in which arrows are put, because mention had been made of a polished shaft or arrow before.

Ver. 3. *And said unto me*, &c.] Both in the everlasting council, and when he made a covenant with him in eternity; when he found him and anointed him, and laid help on him; and also when he brought him, his first begotten, into the world, at his incarnation:

thou art my servant; of his choosing, appointing, calling, sending, bringing forth, and supporting; so he was as Mediator, especially in his estate of humiliation, when he appeared in the form of a servant, and came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many; thereby to obtain redemption, which was the great work and service he was appointed to; which he readily undertook, and willingly and cheerfully engaged in, and diligently and faithfully performed; to whom justly belong the characters of an obedient, diligent, prudent, and faithful servant; in answering which he showed his regard to his Father's will, his love to his people, and his great humility and condescension:

O Israel; a name of Christ, and which properly belongs to him, being the antitype of Jacob or Israel; the Head and representative of the whole Israel of God; who was of Israel according to the flesh, and an Israelite indeed in a spiritual sense, and was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Israel is a name of the church, often given to it in this prophecy; Christ and his church, by virtue of the union between them, have the same names; as she is sometimes called by his names, Christ, and the Lord our righteousness, so he is here called by her name Israel, (⁴⁶²1 Corinthians 12:12 ⁴²¹Jeremiah 23:6 33:16):

in whom I will be glorified; this is Jehovah's end in all he does in nature or grace; and is what Christ had in view in working out our salvation; and all the divine perfections are glorified in it by him, the wisdom, power, faithfulness, holiness, justice, love, grace, and mercy of God. Some render the words actively, "in thee" or "in whom I will glory"^{f965}; as his own Son,

in whom he is well pleased, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; and in whom also all the seed of Israel glory, as well as are justified. Or, as others, Israel is he, of “whom by thee I will glory”, or “glorify”^{f966}; meaning, that it was the spiritual and mystical Israel, the church, whom he would save by his Son and servant, the Messiah, and bring to glory.

Ver. 4. *Then I said*, &c.] The Messiah said, by way of objection, in a view of what treatment he should meet with, or when entered on his work, and which he found by experience, what follows:

I have laboured in vain; this is not to be understood of the travail of his soul, or of his sufferings and death, which were not in vain, but issued in the redemption and salvation of his people; but of his ministry and miracles, and fatiguing journeys among the Jews; which, with respect to them, were in vain, as to their conversion and reformation; they rejecting the Messiah, slighting his doctrines and miracles, refusing to be gathered by him, being a faithless and perverse generation:

I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain; by frequent preaching and working of miracles, and travelling from place to place: the same thing is designed as before, repeated in other words, to express the certainty of it, to chew the ingratitude and wickedness of the people, and to utter the complaints of his mind:

yet surely my judgment is with the Lord; or is manifest before the Lord, as the Targum; the Lord knew that he had called him to his office; how prudently, diligently, and faithfully he had executed it; and what was his right and due, and which would be given him; and with this he corrects his former complaint, and makes himself easy, and quiets and satisfies his mind:

and my work with my God; or the reward of my works is before my God, as the Targum; and before himself also, (²³⁰⁰Isaiah 40:10) as his work was assigned him by the Lord, so his reward was promised him, and which he knew he should have; and having done his work, he asked for his reward, and had it, (⁶¹⁷⁰John 17:4,5 ⁵¹⁰⁰Philippians 2:9,10).

Ver. 5. *And now, saith the Lord*, &c.] Jehovah the Father, in confirmation of the call, office, and work of Christ, which he hath declared, (²³⁰¹Isaiah 49:1,3):

that formed me from the womb to be his servant; who preordained him to this service before the world began, and prepared him for it from the womb of his mother Mary, by filling him with grace and wisdom and with the Spirit without measure; anointing him with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and so fitting him as man and Mediator for the preaching of the Gospel, and every other service he called him:

to bring Jacob again, to him; the lost sheep of the house of Israel, God's elect among the Jews, which were as straying sheep; or all his chosen people, whether Jews or Gentiles, which were scattered abroad, and were afar off from God, whom Christ was to bring back again, and bring nigh unto God, and did:

though Israel be not gathered: in general, only a remnant, according to the election of grace, the greater part refusing to be gathered ministerially by him; and the rulers not suffering the common people to attend on his ministry. (⁴²³⁷Matthew 23:37). It may be observed that there is a marginal reading of the Hebrew, different from the written text; instead of **al** , “not” it is **wl** , “to him”; and may be rendered thus, “and Israel shall be gathered unto him”; and then the sense entirely agrees with the preceding clause, with which the words are connected, and not with the following, as the accent “athnach” shows, thus; the Lord appointed and formed me to be his servant to bring back Jacob, and that Israel might be gathered to him; as all the Israel of God, all the elect of God were by the sufferings and death of Christ; (see ⁴¹¹⁰Ephesians 1:10). The marginal reading, and the writing, may be both retained, as in some other places, thus, “and shall not Israel be gathered to him?” since he has formed me to bring back Jacob to him? verily he shall. The marginal reading is followed by the Targum, and the passage paraphrased thus,

“to return the house of Jacob to his service, and Israel shall be brought nigh, to his fear.”

And so it is by Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Kimchi, and by the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, and by Aquila: “yet shall I be glorious” in the eyes of the Lord; or “I shall be glorious”, &c.; as he was at his baptism and transfiguration on the mount; by the wonderful things done in heaven and on earth at the time of his death, at his resurrection from the dead, his ascension to heaven, and exaltation at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers, angels, authorities, and powers, being subject to

him; and by the ministration of the Gospel in the Gentile world, and particularly when he shall reign gloriously in the latter day, and in the New Jerusalem church state:

and my God shall be my strength; to keep up his spirits under all discouragements; to protect him from his enemies; to support him in his work as man; to carry him through it, and enable him completely to perform it, as he promised he would, and as he did, (^{<2308>}Isaiah 49:8 ^{<3821>}Psalms 89:21) (^{<3807>}Psalms 80:17).

Ver. 6. *And he said*, &c.] Or “even he said”; namely, the Lord his God, that called, appointed, and strengthened him for his service:

it is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; the tribes of Jacob and the preserved of Israel are the elect of God among the Jews; though the characters agree with all the chosen of God of other nations, who, are distinguished from the rest of the world, and are “preserved in Christ”, (^{<6100>}Jude 1:1), where they are preserved before they are redeemed and called; not from falling in Adam with the rest of mankind, nor from the general corruption of nature, nor from actual sins and transgressions; yet from the condemnation of the law, the damning power of sin, and the second death; the ground of which is, their being in the love of God, in the covenant of grace, and in the hands of Christ: and yet, notwithstanding this, they are in a most miserable condition as the descendants of Adam, and, in a state of nature; they are “fallen” creatures, which is supposed by the “raising them up” by Christ, whose work it is; they fell in Adam, and are fallen from a state of honour, friendship, and communion with God; from the glorious image stamped on man in his creation; from righteousness and holiness into sin and misery, poverty and beggary; into a very low estate indeed, and are not able to raise up themselves, being feeble and without strength, yea, dead in trespasses and sins; they are gone back from God, and out of the good way, and are gone astray like lost sheep, which is supposed by the “restoring” of them: now it is Christ’s work to “raise up”, “restore”, or “return” these; he raises them to a state of justification and acceptance with God, to a better righteousness than they fell from, and to greater riches, honour, and glory; in consequence of redemption by Christ they are raised to a state of grace here, and to glory hereafter; they are brought nigh to God, from whom they were departed, sons to have access unto him and fellowship with him now, and to be with

him for evermore. Now to do all this is said to be a “light thing”; it was not so in itself, it was a “great thing”, famous and excellent, to be a servant of the Lord, and to be employed in such work as this; and so the Septuagint and Arabic versions render it; but this is to be understood either by way of interrogation, as by the Targum, Kimchi, Ben Melech, and so the Syriac version, “is it a matter of small moment that thou shouldest be my servant?” &c.; surely it is not; or, if it is, I will find thee other work to do: or else it is to be understood comparatively, the elect of God among the Jews being few, in comparison of those among the Gentiles; wherefore it was not work enough, nor honour enough, only to be employed in the redemption of them: and therefore it follows,

I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles; which supposes the Gentiles to be in a state of darkness, as they were before the coming of Christ, and the ministration of the Gospel to them; they were in the dark about the divine Being, the unity of God, and the persons in the Godhead; about the worship of God; about a future state, and about their own state and condition; and about revelation, the truths, doctrines, and ordinances of it: and this expresses, that Christ should be a “light” to them, as he has been, not only in a way of nature, as he is to every man, but in a way of special grace through the ministry of the word; not in his own person, for he only preached in Judea, but by his apostles, by whom he went and preached peace to them afar off; and particularly he was so to them by his Spirit, as a spirit of illumination; and so they came to have light in divine things, and which is a “gift” of the free grace of God. Simeon has respect to this passage, (^{<117>}Luke 2:32) and the Apostle Paul cites it, and applies it to Gospel times, (^{<117>}Acts 13:47), it follows,

that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth; Christ was given, that he might be the author of that salvation, which God had chosen and appointed his people to, and provided for them in covenant; and that being the salvation of his own people, he calls it his own salvation; and which should reach to them all everywhere, in the several parts of the world, and the corners and ends of it, east, west, north, and south, wherever they were. Kimchi refers this to the saving of the Gentiles, after the war of Gog and Magog, yet to come; and with it compares (^{<211>}Isaiah 60:3 66:23).

Ver. 7. *Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One,* &c.] These are all the titles of the Father of Christ, who is the Jehovah, the

self-existent Being, and from whom all have their Being; “the redeemer of Israel”, being concerned with his Son in the redemption, of his people, in the contriving and settling the method of it, and bringing it about; “and his Holy One”, or the Holy One of Israel, the sanctifier of them, together with the blessed Spirit; who speaks the following words, not to the Prophet Isaiah, as Aben Ezra, nor to the people of the Jews, as the Targum, Jarchi, and Kimchi, but to Christ:

to him whom man despiseth; whom the Jews despised, because of the meanness of his descent, parentage, and education; because of his doctrines, disciples, and followers; and because his kingdom was not of this world, and came not with observation: or “whom a soul despiseth”, or “despised in soul”^{f967}; heartily despised, as Christ was; or “who despiseth his soul”^{f968}, or life, as Christ did his, for the sake of his people, for whom he freely laid his life down, and made his soul an offering for sin:

to him whom the nation abhorreth; the nation of the Jews abhorred Christ, his person, doctrine, and miracles; they hated him, and would not have him to rule over them: they persecuted him, and sought to slay him, and at last delivered him up to the Romans to be crucified:

to a servant of rulers; of Jewish rulers in subjection to them, being made under the law; and of Gentile rulers, paying tribute to Caesar, and when scourged by Pilate, and crucified by his order, which was the usual death of servants or slaves. But though he was so ill used, despised, and abhorred, he is encouraged by his divine Father, and great glory and honour are promised him:

kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship; they shall see the glory and majesty of Christ, and rise up in reverence of him, and fall down before him and worship him; which has had its accomplishment in part in Constantine, Theodosius, Valentinian, and other Christian princes, and will have a further fulfilment in the latter day; (see ²⁴²³Isaiah 49:23 45:3 ¹⁹⁷⁰Psalm 72:10,11). This passage is interpreted by the Jews of the Messiah^{f969}:

because of the Lord that is faithful; to his promises to him in raising him from the dead, and giving him glory; in exalting him at his own right hand; in giving him gifts for men, which he bestowed on them; in spreading and succeeding his Gospel in the Gentile world; and in the enlargement of his

kingdom and interest in it; all which obliged, and will oblige, the kings and princes of the earth to own him, and pay homage to him:

and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee; or make it appear that he has chosen thee to be the Saviour and Redeemer of his people, the Head of the church, and the Judge of the whole world.

Ver. 8. *Thus saith the Lord*, &c.] These are the words of God the Father to his Son continued; the Jews themselves interpret them of the Messiah^{f970}:

in an acceptable time have I heard thee: this was the time when Christ was here on earth, when he became incarnate, and suffered and died for his people: this was an acceptable time to God the Father; his very sufferings were acceptable; his sacrifice was of a sweet smelling savour; his righteousness was well pleasing to him; for by all this his perfections were glorified, his purposes were answered, his covenant and promises fulfilled, and his people saved: it was acceptable to men, the things that were now done and procured; as pardon of sin, peace and reconciliation, a justifying righteousness, and complete salvation; which is worthy the acceptance of all that are lost and undone, and see themselves so, and that nothing they can do will save them: or “in a time of good will”^{f971}; such was the time of Christ’s first coming; it was good will to men, (~~424~~ Luke 2:14). God showed his good will to men by the Person whom he sent to save them, his own, only, and beloved Son; and by sending him to save sinners, the chief of sinners, even enemies; and this time was fixed and settled by the good will and pleasure of God; and during this time the Lord heard Christ; he always heard him interceding for himself, and for his people; he heard him in the garden, and on the cross, and at all other times; (see ~~387~~ Hebrews 5:7)

and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; at the time when he wrought out the salvation of his people, then he helped him in it, and through it, as he promised him, and as Christ believed he would, (~~230~~ Isaiah 42:1 50:7,9). This is to be understood of him as man and Mediator, and to show the greatness of the work of salvation, and the concern of God in it; otherwise, as Christ is the mighty God, he needed no help, and his own arm brought salvation to him:

and I will preserve thee; as he did from his enemies in life, in his infancy, and when grown up, that his life might not be taken away before his time;

from being overcome by his enemies in the garden, and on the cross; from the power of death and the grave, by raising him up from thence; he preserved him to his kingdom and glory, and now retains him in heaven until the time of the restitution of all things; and will preserve his seed, and his throne, his cause, and interest, to the end of time:

and give thee for a covenant of the people; Jews and Gentiles, all that are given to him, and whom he redeems by his blood, whom the Spirit sanctifies, and applies the blessings and promises of the covenant to; which is to be understood of the covenant of grace: Christ is said to be given for it unto them, he being a covenantee in it; the representative of these people in it; the surety of it for them; the Mediator and messenger of it to them; and the ratifier and confirmer of it; and as he is the great blessing of it, the sum and substance of it; and as all the blessings and promises of it are in him; and this may respect the constitution of the covenant from everlasting, and the manifestation of it in time; and this is a gift of God honourable to Christ, of free grace to his people, very comprehensive and unspeakable. Kimchi says this refers to the times of the Messiah: and the end of all this is

to establish the earth; not the land of Judea, but the whole earth; which, were it not for Christ, and his covenant and suretyship engagements for his people, and for the sake of them, and their salvation, would long ago have been dissolved and broke to pieces; but he bears up the pillars of it; and, when he has gathered in all his people, will destroy it: or the end in his being given for a covenant was to “raise up” the fallen inhabitants of the earth, for so the word¹⁹⁷² may be rendered; or to raise up the elect of God unto life, who were obnoxious to death; or to establish, settle, and confirm the church of God on earth; (see ⁴⁸⁸⁶Psalm 89:36,37). The Targum is, “to raise up the righteous that lie in the dust”, referring it to the resurrection of the dead:

to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; the desolate cities of Judah, or the Gentile world, which was like a desolate wilderness: it seems to denote the desolate condition of the church, which should become comfortable and flourishing through the numerous conversions of Jews and Gentiles, as the fruit and effect of the covenant of grace made with Christ; in which the Heathen were given for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, (⁴¹¹⁸Psalm 2:8,9 ³⁴¹⁹Isaiah 49:19 54:3).

Ver. 9. *That thou mayest say to the prisoners, go forth,* &c.] God’s covenant people, while unconverted, are prisoners; they are in the prison of

sin, under the power and dominion of it, and under the guilt of it, and obligation to punishment for it; and they are in the prison of the law, they are transgressors of it, and are accused and convicted by it, and are condemned, and put in prison, and held there; and they are also Satan's prisoners, and are held and led captive by him at his will; and by virtue of the covenant, and the blood of it, these prisoners are set free; and Christ in the Gospel speaks unto them, and proclaims liberty to them; and by the knowledge of the truth they are made free, and are brought into the liberty of the children of God; and are bid to go forth, and they are brought forth from their prison houses; and bid to go to the house of God, and walk at liberty, enjoying all the privileges and ordinances of the Gospel:

to them that are in darkness; in a state of nature and unregeneracy, which is a state of infidelity and ignorance; when men are in the dark, and know not themselves, nor their lost state and condition; nor the exceeding sinfulness of sin; nor Christ, and the way of salvation by him; nor the Spirit, and the operations of his grace; nor the Scriptures, and the doctrines of them:

show yourselves; among the people of God, in his house and ordinances, when called, converted, and enlightened by Christ; or "be revealed"^{f973} or manifested, when they are known to be, what they were not known before, the people and children of God. The Targum is,

"be revealed to the light;"

such are called to partake of the light of grace, and to enjoy the light of comfort and communion:

they shall feed in the ways; not in the broad road and highways of sin, but in the ways of God, in the word and ordinances: this denotes the publicness and pleasantness of them, and the plenty of provisions in them; and yet where it might not be expected, and where exposed to enemies: the allusion is to cattle, that are drove from place to place, and as they pass along feed in the ways upon such pasture as they there find; and suggests, that the saints are travellers, and as such have food provided them by the way:

and their pastures shall be in all high places; on hills and mountains, which are often barren and unfruitful. The Targum is,

"in or by rivers of water shall be the place of their habitation."

Ver. 10. *They shall not hunger nor thirst*, &c.] Being fed in the ways and high places of Gospel ordinances with the love of God, with covenant mercies and precious promises, with Christ, the bread of life, and his grace the water of life, and with the doctrines of the Gospel; they do not desire carnal things, as formerly, but spiritual ones, which they have and are satisfied with, and desire no other food: it signifies that there shall be no famine of the word, nor want of spiritual provisions; it is applied to the New Jerusalem state, (^{<6676>}Revelation 7:16) and so the following clause,

neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; not the sun of persecution, nor the heat of fiery trials and afflictions, particularly in the latter day; nor the heat of a fiery law and divine wrath, or of Satan's fiery darts; not however in the above mentioned state, or in the ultimate glory:

for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them; Christ, the great and good Shepherd of the sheep, who had mercy on them in eternity, and therefore undertook to feed them; and in time, and therefore laid down his life for them; and now in heaven, and sympathizes with him; and at the last day they shall find mercy with him: these he leads out of a state of nature, from the wilderness, where he finds them; out of their sinful ways, and from the pastures of their own righteousness; and he leads them in paths they had not known, in which they should go, in the way of truth, faith, and holiness; in right, though sometimes rough ways; he leads them to himself, his blood, righteousness, and fulness; into his Father's presence, and to his house and ordinances; into Gospel truths, and from one degree of grace to another, and at last to eternal glory; all which he does gradually, softly, gently, in proportion to their strength, and as they are able to bear:

even by the springs of water shall he guide them; or "fountains of water"^{f974}; even of living water; which are no other than God himself, and the plenty of his grace and mercy; Christ, and the fulness of grace that is in him; the covenant of grace, and the blessings of it; the Gospel, and its ordinances; (see ^{<6677>}Revelation 7:17).

Ver. 11. *And I will make all my mountains a way*, &c.] Or "for", or "into a way"^{f975}; signifying that they should be dug through or levelled, and a way made through them, over them, or upon them, for his people to pass: very probably the allusion is to the mountains that lay between Babylon and Judea; and which the Lord calls his, because of his making and settling, and was therefore able to make them a way, or passable: though the words are not to be literally understood, but denote the removing of all impediments,

obstructions, and difficulties, in the people's return from captivity; which was typical of redemption by Christ, which had its difficulties, which he only could get over; he came leaping over these hills and mountains, and they became a plain before him, the great Zerubbabel; such as the assumption of a sinless nature, to make atonement in for sin, which only could be produced in an uncommon and extraordinary way; the fulfilling of a broken law, satisfying divine justice, engaging with many enemies who were to be conquered, sin, Satan, the world, and death; bearing the wrath of God, and submitting to an accursed death: and so in the conversion of the Gentiles, which may here be referred to, and of any sinner, there are many mountains of difficulties in the way of it, which the Lord only can remove; great opposition is made by the men of the world to the preaching of the Gospel, the means of it to the work itself, by Satan, who is loathe to lose a subject of his kingdom; and by men themselves, whose carnal minds are enmity to God, and all that is good difficulties arise from the state of deadness, darkness, and hardness of heart men are in before conversion from the corruptions of their nature, and strong habits of sin; from the general depravity of all the powers and faculties of the soul; from the bad company they have got into; or from their own self-righteousness, they are loathe to part with: and when men are called, and a work of God is begun, there are many mountains appear in their way of coming to Christ; as their numerous and aggravated sins, and doubts about the willingness Christ to receive such sinners; but, when God works, nothing can let. Many are the obstructions the saints meet with in their passage, through this world, by reason of a body of sin, Satan's temptations, the world's persecutions, afflictions of various kinds, strait circumstances of life, losses, crosses, and disappointments; unbelief of itself is a mountain, and raises many others; but the Lord makes a way for his people through all; it may be some respect may be had to the spread of the Gospel in the world, and the introduction of latter day glory, and the difficulties in the way thereof, which the Lord has been removing, and will remove. Rome Pagan is one mountain which God has removed; and Rome Papal is another he will, move, with all the antichristian powers; and the Turkish empire is another:

and my highways shall be exalted; Christ is the great highway of all, and next his word and ordinances, which are ways of holiness and righteousness; these may be said to be "exalted", being conspicuous and visible; and, like causeways, or, highways cast up, that are above, and carry over the mire and dirt; so these carry over the mire and dirt of sin and

corruption; and may be said to be so when made use of, approved, and valued: or the words may be rendered, “they shall be”, or “let them be exalted on my highways”^{f976}; that is, his people, being in the exercise of faith, and in the discharge of their duty; (see ^{<1983>}Psalm 18:33 ^{<3017>}Habakkuk 3:17-19) with these words compare (^{<2418>}Isaiah 40:3,4) perhaps this passage may be best explained by (^{<6162>}Revelation 16:12), where mention is made of the drying up of the river Euphrates, or of the destruction of the Ottoman empire, to make way for the conversion of the eastern nations, prophesied of, among others, in the following verse.

Ver. 12. *Behold, these shall come from far*, &c.] This is a prophecy of the conversion of the Jews, or of the Gentiles, or of both, in the latter day, in the several parts of the world; who shall come to Christ, and to his churches, and join in fellowship with them: the allusion is to the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, and from all other parts at that time; some are said to come “from far”, from the east, as it is generally interpreted, from the several eastern nations, as Persia, Judea lying west from them, on the western or Mediterranean sea:

and, lo, these from the north; from Media, as some; or rather from Babylon, which lay north of Judea:

and from the west; or “from the sea”; the Mediterranean sea, and the countries beyond it, which lie west of Judea:

and these from the land of Sinim. The Targum and Vulgate Latin version render it, from the land of the south, with which Jarchi and Kimchi agree, where dwelt the Sinites, which were of the children of Canaan, (^{<0107>}Genesis 10:17), as the latter observes; and where were the wilderness of Sin, and mountain of Sinai, according to the observation of Jerom. Aben Ezra thinks Egypt is meant, which lay south of Judea, and conjectures that Sinai, a place in it, is designed; perhaps Sin, as others are of opinion, called “the strength of Egypt”, (^{<2015>}Ezekiel 30:15), the same city the Greeks called Pelusium; and R. Saadiah, in Kimchi, supposes it is here intended, which is most likely; the Pelusiotae are meant. Manasseh ben Israel^{f977} will have it that the Chinese are intended: China is indeed called, by Ptolemy^{f978}, the country of the Sinites; and if this is designed, which is not probable, it cannot be so called from the family of Cina, as Martinius^{f979} thinks, since that family was not in being till two or three hundred years after this prophecy; and, if it concerns them, it will have its accomplishment, when the kingdoms of this world shall become Christ’s, (^{<6115>}Revelation 11:15)

compare with this (^{<4182>}Matthew 8:12) yea, they are said to have received the Gospel, in the first times of it, by the means of the apostles, Thomas, or Bartholomew^{f980}. The Septuagint version renders it, “from the land of the Persians”; and the Arabic version, “from the land of Persia”; and the Syriac version, “from the sea of Senjam”.

Ver. 13. *Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth,* &c.] Which may be understood of the heavens, and the earth by a personification, a figure usual in Scripture, to express the greatness of the benefit received, and to raise thankfulness and admiration in the hearts of God’s people; (see ^{<4901>}Psalm 90:11,12 ^{<2352>}Isaiah 55:12) or by the heavens may be meant the angels in heaven, who, as they rejoice at the conversion of a single sinner, will much more rejoice at such numerous conversions among Jews and Gentiles, here prophesied of, (^{<4250>}Luke 15:10) and, by the “earth”, the saints on earth, the excellent in it, who have a more immediate concern in, and must be affected with, the case here represented:

and break forth into singing, O mountains; such as are in high office either in the state, as Christian kings and princes, (^{<23423>}Isaiah 49:23) or in the church, as prophets and apostles, (^{<6180>}Revelation 18:20). The reason of all this is,

for the Lord hath comforted his people; with the discoveries of his love and grace; by his gracious presence among them; by the coming of Christ unto them in a spiritual way; by sending his Spirit, and renewing the face of things, and reviving his work in the midst of them; by the pure and powerful preaching of the Gospel, and comfortable administration of Gospel ordinances; and by large additions of converts made unto them:

and will have mercy upon his afflicted, or “poor”, or “meek” and “humble” ones, as the words^{f981} may be rendered: the Lord’s people is a poor and afflicted people, poor in a temporal and spiritual sense; the church and interest of Christ is in a poor and low condition: the Lord’s people are afflicted outwardly and inwardly, and so become meek, and are kept humble; these the Lord, in the latter day, will raise from a low and distressed condition to a more exalted and comfortable one; which will be an instance of his mercy and compassion, and be matter of joy unto them.

Ver. 14. *But Zion said,* &c.] By way of objection, as some think, to the above prophecies of glorious and comfortable times; she being now in a very disconsolate condition, and could not tell how to take it in, how it

should thus be, when the case was with her as it was; though I rather think the words should be rendered, “for Zion had said”; and which is mentioned to show the uncomfortable condition she had been in, and to observe the method the Lord took to comfort her, as he before promises. Reference may be had to the Jews in the times of the Babylonish captivity, mentioned under the name of Zion; because, as Kimchi says, that was the chief city of the kingdom of Israel; who, because of the length of their captivity, might think themselves forsaken and forgotten by the Lord: yet, by Zion is meant the church under the Gospel dispensation, the saints that meet at Mount Zion, the hundred and forty and four thousand, with the Lamb there, (^{<3822>}Hebrews 12:22 ^{<640>}Revelation 14:1):

the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me: so the church might be tempted to conclude, during the persecutions under Rome Pagan, and the long reign of antichrist not yet at an end, and because of his oppressions and cruelties; and because of the low and declining state of the interest of Christ, as it now is; few being converted by the ministry of the word; great opposition made to the truths of the Gospel with success; the ordinances of it perverted or neglected; the presence of God in them very little enjoyed; great indifference and lukewarmness among professors of religion, and discord and dissensions in churches. And so it is with particular believers, when they do not enjoy the presence of God as formerly, either in private or in public ordinances; have not had a promise for a long time; nor are favoured with the discoveries of the love of God, or with any visit from him; then they are apt to say they are forsaken by the Lord, though they cannot give up their interest in him, and therefore call him “my Lord”.

Ver. 15. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?* &c.] This is the Lord’s answer to the church’s complaint, instancing in the care and affection of a mother to her child, thereby illustrating his love to his people; he instances in a “woman”, the tender sex; in a “child” of her’s, an infant, not one grown up, from which her affections might be alienated by disobedience; her suckling child, she had in her arms, and on her knees, and whom her breasts would put her in mind of; and since one that is not an own child may be suckled, it is called “the son of her womb”; and is it possible for such an one to be forgotten?

yea, they may forget; through inadvertency, want of affection, a cruel disposition, hurry of business, sickness, public calamities, &c.

(^{204B}Lamentations 4:3,4,10 ^{205B}Deuteronomy 28:57), such monsters in nature there may be, though rare:

yet will I not forget thee; he cannot forget, because of his nature, on which forgetfulness cannot properly fall; he will not, because of his promise, which never fails; he may seem to his people to have forgotten them, and he may be thought to have done so by others; he forgets their sins, but not their persons; he cannot forget his love, nor his covenant with them, nor his promises made to them; nor does he forget their love to him, nor their works, words, and thoughts; the righteous are had by him in everlasting remembrance. All this suggests that the Lord stands in the relation of a parent to his people, and they stand in the relation of children to him; they are born of him, and are as it were pieces of himself, and little images of him, and dear to him as the apple of his eye; they are like sucking children, that suck in the milk of his word, and suck at the breasts of his ordinances; and they are used by him in the most tender manner, as infants are; they are kissed by him, and dandled on the knee; they are led by him, and taught to go; he delights in them when they begin to speak in prayer or praise, though in a lisping and stammering manner; all their little actions are engaging, their works done by them, though imperfect, and a great deal of childishness in them; when anything ails them, he sympathizes with them, he takes care of them, and provides for them; and it is a concern to him whenever he is obliged to chastise them, and can he therefore forget them?

Ver. 16. *Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands*, &c.]

Not upon his thick clouds, the clouds of heaven under him, always in view, as R. Saadiah Gaon, mentioned by Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Kimchi: much better the Targum,

“lo, as upon the hands thou art engraven before me;”

signifying that his people were always in his sight, his eyes were ever upon them, and never withdrawn from them; as anything held in the hand, or tied to or wore upon it, as a signet or ring that has the name of a person on it, to which the allusion may be; which shows how near and dear they are to him, what affection he has for them, and care of them; (see ^{206B}Song of Solomon 8:6). Some think respect is had to the wounds in the hands of Christ, which, being on their account, are looked upon and remembered by

him; or, however, to their being in his hands, out of which none can pluck them, (⁴⁹¹⁸John 10:28,29):

thy walls are continually before me; not the walls of Jerusalem to rebuild, though there may be an allusion to them; but either the walls of their houses where they dwell; his delights being in the habitable parts of his earth, where his saints are; or rather the walls of the church of God, for the erecting and establishing of which he is concerned. The metaphor seems to be taken from an architect that has the plan of a building, a house, or a city and its walls, in his hand, or lying before him. The phrase denotes the constant care and concern of Jehovah for the protection and safety of his church and people; who places angels about them, salvation for walls and bulwarks to them, yea, he himself is a wall of fire about them, (²³⁰¹Isaiah 26:1 ³⁰¹⁵Zechariah 2:5 ⁶²¹⁴Revelation 21:14).

Ver. 17. *Thy children shall make haste*, &c.] Regenerate persons, young converts, such as are born again of incorruptible seed by the word; these shall flock to the church,

as doves to the windows; join themselves to her, and submit to Gospel ordinances, and

make haste, and delay not, to keep the Lord's commandments; which is no small pleasure, joy, and comfort to the church of God. Some render it, "thy builders"^{f982} "shall make haste"; Gospel ministers, who are wise masterbuilders under Christ; these shall come with all readiness and cheerfulness, and build in the temple, the church of God, and rebuild her walls, and repair her breaches:

thy destroyers and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee; tyrants and persecutors of the church shall cease, and be no more; and false teachers, that corrupt the minds of men, subvert their faith, and destroy their souls, as antichrist and his ministers, shall be drove out of the church, and destroyed by Christ, the Head of it; (see ⁶⁶¹⁸Revelation 11:18 ⁴¹⁹1 John 2:19).

Ver. 18. *Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold*, &c.] Look east, west, north, and south, and behold the flocking converts from all parts; see on (²⁴⁹²Isaiah 49:12). The words are spoken to the church, and for her comfort; and so the Targum,

“lift up thine eyes round about, O Jerusalem, and see all the children of the people of thy captivity:”

all these gather themselves together, and come to thee; though of different nations, and come from different quarters, yet coalesce together, make one body, and join themselves with the church, in which they centre, and are incorporated:

as I live, saith the Lord; this is the form of an oath, sometimes used by the Lord, to denote the importance and certainty of a thing, and to assure his people of it:

thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament; as children’s children are the crown of old men, (²⁰⁷⁶Proverbs 17:6), so young converts are the crown, glory, and ornament of the church; even such who are beautified with the graces of the Spirit, and whose conversations are as become the Gospel of Christ:

and bind them on thee as a bride doeth; her clothes, the attire of her head, and her jewels. So in the latter day, when the Jews are converted, and the fulness of the Gentiles brought in, the marriage of the Lamb will be come, and the church made ready, as a bride, for her husband, and be very beautiful and comely in his sight, as well as very comfortable and glorious in herself; and which will be matter of joy to all the saints, (⁶⁸⁰⁷Revelation 19:7,8). The Targum is,

“all these shall be unto thee as a garment of glory, and their works in the midst of thee as the ornament of a bride.”

Ver. 19. *For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, &c.]* Or “thy land of destruction, or thy destroyed land”^{f983}; laid waste and desolate by the enemy, without inhabitants; such countries in which there were few professors of the true religion:

shall even now be too narrow, by reason of the inhabitants; because of the multitude of them; a hyperbolical expression, setting forth the great numbers of Christian converts everywhere: this straitness will not be on account of strangers or enemies having taken possession; but on account of those who are true and proper possessors: for it follows,

and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away; from the church; the Heathen, the Gentiles, or Papists,

shall now perish out of his, Jehovah's, "land"; "sinners shall be consumed out of the earth, and the wicked be no more", (~~3906~~ Psalm 10:16 104:35). Antichrist and his abettors, which "swallowed" up the people, their riches, and substance, like beasts of prey, to which he is compared, shall go into perdition, and never disturb the church any more, (~~6601~~ Revelation 13:1,11 17:3,8 19:20).

Ver. 20. *The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other,* &c.] Which "other lost" are not the Jews, the broken branches, rejected and cut off for unbelief; and the "children after" them not the Gentiles converted, which took their place; but "the other" are such who have been destroyed by the Heathen persecutions, and especially by the antichristian cruelties; and the "children after", the great numbers of converts upon the fall of antichrist. The words may be rendered, "the children of thine orbity"^{f984}, or "childless state"; such as were born unto her in an uncommon, extraordinary, and unexpected way, when the church seemed to be in a widowhood estate, or like a woman that is past bearing children:

shall say again in thine ears; or, "shall yet say"^{f985}; that is, hereafter, in time to come: for this is a prophecy of what should be said in the church's hearing, and such as had never been said before; and therefore improperly rendered "again"; for there never has been as yet such a time as this, or such a large number of converts, as to say,

the place is too strait for me to dwell in; there is not room enough for us, as in (~~1201~~ 2 Kings 6:1):

give place to me that I may dwell; one and another of the children or converts should say, make room for me, that I may have a name and a place among you, and dwell with you, and abide in the house of the Lord, and partake of the privileges and ordinances of it: but the word used signifies drawing nigh, and not giving way or removing; and should rather be rendered, "draw nigh to me that I may dwell"; or "and I shall dwell"^{f986}, or "sit"; come close to one another, and we shall all sit and dwell comfortably together; just as when a house is well filled with agreeable company, and there is an unwillingness to part with or lose any, they are desired to sit close together, that there may be room for all: and this is, and will be, the case with the church and her members; they will be desirous to sit regularly, and close together, in Gospel order, that everyone may be comfortable, and partake of the benefit of communion, and none be obliged to depart: and to this sense Gussetius^{f987} interprets the phrase.

Ver. 21. *Then shalt thou say in thine heart, &c.]* In, a way of admiration, secretly within herself, astonished at the numerous crowds flocking in;

who hath begotten me these? not their natural parents, nor they themselves;

for they are not born of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh; nor ministers of the Gospel, though they are instruments, yet not the cause; but God only, Father, Son, and Spirit, to whom regeneration is only ascribed: regeneration is a wonderful work of God; it is unaccountable to the natural man; it is amazing to the saints themselves; and it is matter of astonishment to the church of God; especially when on a sudden, and without means, and in great numbers, men are born again; and particularly when these come from among the Gentiles, which seems to be the case here:

seeing I have lost my children; by captivity and the sword, by the tyranny and cruelty of the man of sin:

and am desolate; or alone, as if without a husband, or any to take care of her: this represents the church in the wilderness, during the reign of antichrist, (^{<6624>}Revelation 12:14), while she seems to be forsaken of the Lord her husband, though she is not:

and a captive; to the Romish antichrist; (see ^{<6630>}Revelation 13:10):

and removing to and fro; being forced to flee from place to place, by reason of persecution: there is, no doubt, an allusion in all this to the case of the Jews in the Babylonish captivity:

and who hath brought up these? the same that begot them, even the Lord himself; who nourishes and brings up his children with the milk of the Gospel, and the breasts of Gospel ordinances; so that they are brought up from children to young men, from young men to fathers, till they become perfect men; even the church in the wilderness, with her children, are nourished by him, for a time, and times, and half a time, (^{<6624>}Revelation 12:14) which is wonderful:

behold, I was left alone; seemingly without husband or children, in a desolate and wilderness state:

these, where had they been? in the ruins of Adam's fall; in a state of darkness; in the graves of sin; in a pit wherein is no water; in the hands of

Satan, and among wicked men; even in Babylon itself, but now called out; (see ^{<684>}Revelation 18:4).

Ver. 22. *Thus saith the Lord God, &c.*] In answer to the questions, where had these children been? and from whence did they come? who begot them, and brought them up? and by what means was all this done, or would be done?

I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles; beckoning them to come unto him, directing and ordering them what to do; or rather exerting the power of his grace in the conversion of them. The Targum is,

“I will reveal my power among the Gentiles;”

his efficacious grace attending the ministry of the word, whereby it becomes “the power of God unto salvation”; for when that hand is lifted up or exerted, the “word” comes “not in word only”, “but in power, and in the Holy Ghost”, and is effectual to saving purposes:

and set up my standard to the people; meaning Christ, “the ensign of the people”; who, in the ministration of the Gospel, is set up as a standard, to gather persons to him, as an ensign or standard is set up by a general of an army to collect soldiers to him, to come and enlist, and fight under his banners; (see ^{<2110>}Isaiah 11:10,12):

and they shall bring thy sons in their arms; or, “bosom”^{<988>}; such as are regenerated by the Spirit and grace of God, under the word, are to be tenderly dealt with by the ministers of the Gospel, as they are by Christ, (^{<2401>}Isaiah 40:11) and to be encouraged to come and join themselves to the church, and be directed and assisted by them in that service:

and thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders; meaning the same as before, only perhaps weaker converts, dealing with them according to their infirmities; carrying them with as much ease, care, and tenderness, as young children are carried on the shoulders of their parents or others. It may be these expressions are designed to show how assisting and encouraging the Christian Gentiles will be to the Jews, when converted in their several countries, both to admit them into Gospel churches, and bring them into their own land; (see ^{<260>}Isaiah 66:19,20).

Ver. 23. *And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers, &c.*] Who shall show favour and respect to the church

and people of God, grant them liberty, and protect and defend them in their religious privileges: for this is to be understood not figuratively of apostles and apostolical men, as Jerom, who are kings and priests unto God, and who feed the church with the milk of the word, and the breasts of ordinances; but literally of the kings and queens of the earth; and is thought to have had its fulfilment, at least in part, in Cyrus, Ahasuerus, Esther, and others; but more so in Christian kings and queens, as Constantine and Helena, Theodosius and Placilla, and others; and will have a far greater accomplishment in the latter day glory; (see ^{<311B>}Isaiah 60:3,11,16):

they shall bow down toward thee with their faces toward the earth; which expresses the great veneration and respect these great personages shall have for the church of God, and their entire submission and subjection to the Gospel of Christ, and the ordinances of it, and to the laws and discipline of his house; for they shall now become members of the Christian church, and be entirely under the government of it, as to religious things; (see ^{<411B>}Revelation 3:9 21:24)

and lick up the dust of thy feet; the allusion is to the eastern nations, especially the Persians, who, in the adoration of their kings, used to kiss the ground they stood on, and seemed to lick, if they did not, the dust that was about them; and it expresses the very low submission of kings and princes to the church, and their high veneration of it; their willingness to do the meanest office for the good of it, and their great regard and affection for the meanest of its members, the dust of Zion; (see ^{<471B>}Psalms 72:9 102:14):

and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who has the hearts of all men, even of kings, in his hands, and can turn them, and bring them to a thorough submission to his will; and who is able to accomplish all his promises, and is true and faithful to them; this will be known and owned by the church, when the above things have their accomplishment:

for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me; or for my salvation, as the Targum; for favours from him; for the light of his countenance; for the discoveries and application of pardoning grace; for the performance of promises; for answers of prayer; for his spiritual coming, and for eternal glory and happiness; these shall not be ashamed of him for whom they wait, nor of their hope and expectation of him, nor at his coming.

Ver. 24. *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, &c.*] This is an objection to the accomplishment of what is predicted and promised above, taken from the power of the enemy, and his right to detain the people; and are either the words of the nations among whom the Jews were, according to Kimchi, boasting of, and presuming upon, and opposing to what is said, both their might and right, to keep the people in their own hands, bidding as it were defiance to any to attempt to take them from them; or the words of the prophet, in the name of the people, as Aben Ezra, objecting to their deliverance, doubting the effecting of it, or admiring at it: it may be applied to the taking of the Lord's people out of the hands of Satan, who may be said to be "mighty" or "strong", as he appears to be from his nature, a spirit; from his names, the strong man armed, a roaring lion, the great red dragon, leviathan, the piercing serpent, &c.; and from his power and dominion over the evil angels, and over men, both their bodies and souls; and to whom the Lord's own people are a "prey", while they are in a state of nature, as all mankind, and every unconverted man, be; a difficult thing it is to take any out of his hands, and a wonder of grace it is when it is done:

or the lawful captive delivered? justly and lawfully taken captive in war, as the Jews were by the Babylonians: or, "the captivity of the righteous be delivered"^{f989}; that is, either the righteous who were taken captives; or those that took them, who were so in their opinion, at least with respect to the taking of them, doing, as they judged, what was lawful and just. The people of God are in their state of nature led by Satan at his will, and are lawful captives in the judgment of him, and his principalities; and are in reality taken in war by him, and not only led captive by him at his will, but with their own will, and are justly given up unto him. Perhaps all this may be better referred to the people of God being a prey to the Romish antichrist, and detained as a lawful captive by him, and to the difficult and wonderful deliverance of them from him in the latter day; (see ~~Gen~~ Revelation 13:4,7,10 18:4). The Targum interprets this and the following verse of the captives of Esau and Ishmael, by whom seem to be meant the Pope and Turk.

Ver. 25. *But thus saith the Lord, &c.*] In answer to the above objection, being mightier than the mighty, and stronger than he by whom his people are detained, being the Almighty:

even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; or, “the prey of the violent ones”⁹⁹⁰; which is an answer both as to might and right; as to might, though they are the captives of the mighty, yet they shall be taken away from them by him that is mightier than they, even the mighty God; and as to right, they are the prey of persons that have by force and violence usurped a power over them, and therefore shall be delivered; as the Lord’s people are out of the hands of Satan; both in redemption by Christ out of the hands of him that is stronger than they; and in conversion by him who is stronger than the strong man armed; and enters into their hearts, the palace of the devil, spoils his goods, takes his armour from him, overcomes and binds him, and delivers them from his power; so that he shall not have dominion over them, and much less destroy them, though he may sometimes be terrible to them by his temptations, (⁹⁹¹Jeremiah 31:11 ⁹⁹²Luke 11:21,22). This will have a further accomplishment, in the deliverance of the Lord’s people from the mighty and terrible beast of Rome:

for I will contend with them that contend with thee; the Babylonians literally; Satan and his principalities figuratively; and also antichrist, and the antichristian kings and states, that quarrel with, fight against, and oppress the Lord’s people:

and I will save thy children; regenerate persons, the members of the church, be they where they will; these the Lord will save with a temporal, spiritual, and eternal salvation, Deliverance from the Romish yoke and oppression seems to be here chiefly designed, when Jezebel’s children will be killed with death, as follows; (see ⁹⁹³Revelation 2:23).

Ver. 26. *And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh,* &c.] Not that they should feed upon their own flesh, because of famine, for this was not the case of Babylon when taken; but that they should destroy one another, as the Midianites did; and which was true of some of the Babylonians, who assisted Cyrus in taking the city, and destroying the inhabitants of it; and will be verified in the Popish party killing one another:

and they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine; which denotes the abundance of blood that shall be shed, and the pleasure in shedding of it. It will be a righteous thing with God to give the whore of Rome her own blood to drink, even so as to be made drunk with it as with wine, who has been drunk already with the blood of the saints, (⁹⁹⁴Revelation 16:6 17:6). The Targum is,

“I will give the flesh of them that oppress thee for food to every fowl of the heavens; and as they are drunken with wine, so the beasts of the field shall be drunken with their blood;”

(see ~~6697~~ Revelation 19:17,18):

and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob; it shall be notorious to all the world, that Jehovah, the “Lord” of lords, the Lord of the whole earth, is the “Saviour and Redeemer” of his church and people out of all their afflictions, oppressions, and persecutions, by the Romish antichrist; this will be apparently seen, and publicly owned and acknowledged, when antichrist shall be destroyed, and the church saved; by which it will be manifest, it being the Lord’s work, and wondrous in the eyes of men, that he is “the mighty One of Jacob”, able to help and save them.