

CHAPTER 51

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 51

This chapter gives the church and people of God reason to expect comfortable times and certain salvation, though they had many enemies. They are directed to look to Abraham and Sarah, signified by the rock and hole of the pit, and observe how he was called alone, blessed and increased; which should be improved as an argument to strengthen their faith, that God could and would bless and increase his church, though in a low estate, and bring it into a flourishing one, (²⁵¹⁰Isaiah 51:1-3). They are assured of the publication of the Gospel, expressed by the law, doctrine, and judgment of the Lord; by which means the righteousness and salvation of Christ should be brought nigh to them, as the object of their trust and confidence, (²⁵¹⁰Isaiah 51:4,5), and also of the perpetuity of his righteousness and salvation, when the heavens, and the earth, and the inhabitants of it, should decay, even their revilers and persecutors, and therefore they need not fear their reproaches and revilings, (²⁵¹⁶Isaiah 51:6-8), upon which follows a prayer of faith, that the Lord would exert his power as in former times, when he destroyed the Egyptians, and dried up the Red sea for Israel to pass through, the ransomed of the Lord; from whence it might be concluded, that the redeemed of the Lord would be brought into a very comfortable condition again, (²⁵¹⁹Isaiah 51:9-11) wherefore they had no reason to be afraid of men, since the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, would deliver, comfort, and establish them, of which he assured them by his prophet, (²⁵¹²Isaiah 51:12-16), and though Jerusalem and her sons were, or would be, in a very distressed condition, through the sword and famine, which is described, (²⁵¹⁷Isaiah 51:17-20), yet they should be delivered out of it, and their persecutors should be brought into the same, (²⁵²¹Isaiah 51:21-23).

Ver. 1. *Hearken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness,* &c.] After having declared the doom of the wicked, and those that trust to their own righteousness, the Lord returns to them that fear him, whom he describes as such that “follow after righteousness”; not the righteousness of the law, it is the character of carnal Israel to follow after that; nor is that attainable

in the way it is pursued by such; nor is there any justification by it; nor is following that consistent with seeking the Lord, in the next clause: but the righteousness of Christ is meant; not his essential righteousness as God; nor the righteousness of his office as Mediator; but that which consists of his active and passive obedience; of which he is the author and giver, and is in him as its subject: this is what is commonly called imputed righteousness, an evangelical one, the righteousness of faith, and is justifying: “following after” this supposes a want of one; a sense of that want; a view of this as out of themselves, and in another; a love and liking of it, and a vehement desire for it; and what determines to an eager pursuit of it are its perfection, suitableness, and use: now such persons are called to hearken to the Lord; to the Word of the Lord, as the Targum; to Christ, to his Gospel, and to his ordinances, particularly to what is after said:

ye that seek the Lord: the Lord Christ, for life and salvation; for righteousness and strength; for more grace from him; a greater knowledge of him, and of doctrine from him, as the Targum; and more communion with him; that seek his honour and glory in the world, and to be for ever with him; who seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; that seek him where he may be found, affectionately and sincerely, carefully, diligently, constantly, and for everything they want:

look unto the rock whence ye are hewn; which is in the next verse interpreted of Abraham; so called, not so much for the strength of his faith, as for his old age; when he looked like a hard dry rock, from whom no issue could be expected; and yet from hence a large number of stones were hewn, or a race of men sprung:

and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged; that is, to Sarah, who was for a long time barren, whose womb was shut up, but afterwards opened; and from whom, as from a cistern, (to which a wife is sometimes compared, (²¹⁶⁵Proverbs 5:15,18)) flowed the waters of Judah, (²³⁸¹Isaiah 48:1) or the Jewish nation. Jerom thinks Christ is meant by both, the Rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength; to whom men are to look for salvation, righteousness, and strength; and out of whose pierced side flowed blood and water: and in this sense he is followed by Cocceius, who interprets the rock of Christ, the Rock of salvation; out of whose side flowed the church, as out of the hole of a pit or cistern.

Ver. 2. *Look unto Abraham your father*, &c.] Not only the father of the Jewish nation, but of all them that believe: this explains what is meant by

the rock, in the former verse, who is to be looked unto for imitation in the exercise of faith, and performance of duty, and for encouragement in distressed times and circumstances:

and unto Sarah that bare you; signified by the pit or cistern; who was not only the mother of the Jewish nation; but such also are her daughters who do well, and tread in her steps: now the very unpromising circumstances these two persons were in, are proposed to be considered by the church in her present ones, for the encouragement of her faith; that as a numerous issue proceeded from them, so also should she become fruitful and multiply:

for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him; he was without issue when he was “called” out of Chaldea into another country, and also the only one of the family; and the Lord “blessed” him not only with flocks and herds, and gold and silver, but with a son in his old age; and so “increased” him, that there sprung from him as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand by the sea shore innumerable, (^{<8112>}Hebrews 11:12). The Septuagint and Arabic versions, between “blessed” and “increased”, insert these words, “and I loved him”, which are not in the Hebrew text. The Targum is,

“and one was Abraham, alone in the world, and I brought him to my service, and I blessed him, and multiplied him.”

Ver. 3. *For the Lord shall comfort Zion, &c.*] The church, by his Spirit, in the ministration of the word, and administration of ordinances; by the donation of the blessings of grace, and by the application of Gospel promises; by the discoveries of his love; by granting his gracious presence; by blessing his word; and by calling many souls, and adding them to his people: and in order to engage the church and people of God to believe God will do this, and that he can and will bless and increase them when in a low estate, the above instances of calling Abraham alone, and the blessing and increasing him, are produced:

he will comfort all her waste places; by rebuilding them, and restoring them to their former lustre and glory: the church may be said to be “waste” and desolate, and like “a wilderness” and “desert”, as in the next clauses, when the doctrines of the Gospel are departed from, the ordinances of public worship are not attended to, and the discipline of it is not kept up; when there are great declensions among the Lord’s people, in their faith,

love, patience, forbearance, self-denial, spirituality, and heavenly mindedness; when divisions and animosities prevail among them; when there is a negligence in their lives and conversations; and there are but few instances of conversion, and a general unconcernedness about those things; but so it will not always be:

and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; the church is a “garden”, a small spot, in comparison of the world, distinguished and separated by the grace of God from others; in which are many precious souls, comparable to trees, herbs, and plants; and these do not grow up of themselves, but are planted there by the Lord; and much pains are taken by him, the husbandman, to cultivate this garden: for it is his, the garden of the Lord; it is of his planting; it is his property, and enclosed for his rise; it is an Eden, pleasantly situated on a fruitful hill, Christ Jesus, by the river of divine love; is full of pleasant plants, pleasant to the owner of the garden, and to the saints themselves; it becomes fruitful through the dews of divine grace, the rising of Christ, the sun of righteousness, and the blowing of the south wind, the blessed Spirit; and may be said to be in a very comfortable condition, when the word and ordinances are duly ministered; when the graces of the Spirit are in exercise, and many souls are converted: the consequence of which is,

joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody; for the pure preaching of the Gospel; the feast of fat things made in the holy mountain; the presence of God enjoyed; a lively exercise of grace in the saints; and many souls born again. The Targum is,

“joy and rejoicing shall be found in her; they that offer thanksgiving, and the voice of them that praise;”

all hearts filled with joy and gladness.

Ver. 4. *Hearken unto me, my people*, &c.] His special people, whether Jews or Gentiles, chosen by him, taken into covenant with him; given to Christ, redeemed by him as a peculiar people, and called by his grace; these are exhorted to hearken to him; to his word, as the Targum; (see ²⁵⁰⁰ Isaiah 51:1):

and give ear unto me, O my nation; not the nation of the Jews only, but the Gentiles; a nation taken out of a nation, even out of all nations; a chosen and a holy nation. The Septuagint and Arabic versions render it “kings”; such are made kings and priests unto God: (see ⁴⁰⁰⁰ 1 Peter 2:9,10),

for a law shall proceed from me; not the Sinai law, but the Gospel; that doctrine that is said to go out of Zion, (^{<211B>}Isaiah 2:3), as Kimchi rightly observes, who adds,

“for the King Messiah shall teach the people to walk in the ways of the Lord; and this shall be after the war of Gog and Magog:”

and this law or doctrine of God comes from Christ, and is dictated, directed, and made effectual by his Spirit:

and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people; this is the same with the law, or doctrine of the Gospel, called “judgment”, because it comes from the God of judgment, flows from his wisdom and counsel, and is a declaration of his will; it expands his method of justifying sinners, and is the means of awakening, convincing, and judging the consciences of men, and of informing and establishing the judgments of the saints, and by which the world will be judged at the last day. Now this is

for a light of the people; to enlighten unconverted ones, such who sit in darkness, to turn them from it, and call them out of it into marvellous light; and to illuminate the saints yet more and more, both with respect to doctrine and duty. And this is said to be made to “rest”; which denotes both the continuance of it in the world, until all the ends of it are answered; and the spiritual rest it gives to weary souls now, as well as points out to them that which remains for them hereafter. Though the words may be rendered, “I will cause my judgment to break forth”^{f1002}; like the morning, suddenly, and in a “moment”^{f1003}; to which agrees what follows.

Ver. 5. *My righteousness is near*, &c.] These are either the words of God the Father, and to be understood not of his essential righteousness, nor of his vindictive justice; but of the righteousness of his Son, which he calls his own, because he approves and accepts of it, imputes and reckons it to his people, and with it justifies them. The words may be rendered, “my righteous One”, as in the Vulgate Latin version; not Cyrus, as Grotius; but Christ, God’s righteous servant, who was near to come in the flesh, in order to work righteousness. Or these are the words of Christ, speaking of his own righteousness, which was near being wrought out by him, as it was when he became the end of the law for it, by obeying its precept, and bearing its penalty; and near being revealed in the Gospel, where it is revealed from faith to faith; and near being applied by the blessed Spirit, as it is to all that believe; and is near to be come at, and laid hold on, by faith:

my salvation is gone forth: the “salvation” appointed by the Lord; provided in covenant; wrought out by Christ; applied by the Spirit; and fully enjoyed in heaven: this is “gone forth” in the purpose and decree of God, in prophecy and promise, and in the declaration of the Gospel: or, “my Saviour”, as the Vulgate Latin version; the Saviour of God’s appointing, providing, and sending. Or these are the words of the Saviour himself, who has wrought it out, in whom it is, and of whom it is to be had; it is done, and ready for sinners to look unto and embrace; it is ready to be revealed, and to be fully enjoyed:

and mine arms shall judge the people; to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed, and the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation; both the arms of Christ are ready to receive them, and these protect and defend them, and judge, condemn, and destroy those that despise it:

the isles shall wait upon me; upon Christ, for his coming; for his salvation and righteousness; for his Gospel, the truths, promises, and blessings of it; and in his house and ordinances, for his presence. This is a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles, even in the isles of the sea, those afar off, as ours of Great Britain and Ireland, in which there have been and are many waiting upon him:

and on mine arm shall they trust; as on Christ, the arm of the Lord, for salvation; so on the power of Christ for protection and preservation; and on his promises in the Gospel, for their support; which is the arm of the Lord revealed unto them, and yields much support and comfort, and makes known that which is a proper object of trust.

Ver. 6. *Lift up your eyes to the heavens*, &c.] And observe their beauty and order, the constant and regular motion of the heavenly bodies, the firmness and solidity of them:

and look upon the earth beneath; how stable and well founded it is:

for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke; though they are so firm, and have lasted so long, and have kept their constant situation and course, yet they shall melt away like salt, as the word^{f1004} signifies, and disappear in an instant like smoke. Reference seems to be had to the general conflagration, when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, (^{GRI2}2 Peter 3:12):

and the earth shall wax old like a garment; and be folded up, and laid aside, as useless; (see ^{<49A26>}Psalm 102:26). This seems to design not a substantial destruction of the earth, but of its qualities, when waxing old it shall be renewed and changed. Jarchi interprets these clauses of the princes of the hosts of people in heaven, and the governors of the earth; but the inhabitants thereof are mentioned next:

and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; as the heavens and the earth; be dissolved as they, and in like manner; vanish as smoke, and be seen no more; wax old as a garment, and become useless and unprofitable. Deuteronomy Dieu renders it, “as a louse”^{f1005}, and so this word sometimes signifies; and this sense is approved of by many learned men^{f1006}, and seems best to agree with the text; since neither the heavens and the earth are said to die, nor smoke, or a garment: and it may denote how loathsome and nauseous wicked men are in life, like vermin; and how mean and contemptible in death, their bodies are vile and despicable, and how easily they are destroyed:

but my salvation shall be for ever; that salvation which Christ has wrought out for his people is an everlasting salvation, (^{<2347>}Isaiah 14:17) (^{<3819>}Hebrews 5:9) and they that are interested in it will be always safe and happy; and though they shall die as other men, they shall rise again, and enjoy glory, immortality, and eternal life:

and my righteousness shall not be abolished: the righteousness which Christ has brought in for his people, and by which they are justified, is also everlasting, (^{<2702>}Daniel 9:24) or, “shall not be broken”^{f1007}; it answers all the demands of law and justice, and stands firm against all the accusations and charges of men and devils: or, “shall not fail”^{f1008}, as the Septuagint; its virtue to justify will always continue; it will answer for the saints in a time to come, even at the last judgment. The Targum is, it

“shall not tarry;”

being near to be wrought out and revealed, (^{<2516>}Isaiah 51:5).

Ver. 7. *Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness*, &c.] The righteousness of God, and of his law; the purity of his nature, what righteousness is agreeable to him, and required by him; the imperfection and insufficiency of a man’s own righteousness, and the glory and fulness of Christ’s righteousness, revealed in the Gospel; and so know that, as to

approve of it, follow after it, lay hold upon it, believe in it, and rejoice in it, as their justifying righteousness:

the people in whose heart is my law; not in their heads only, but in their hearts; having an understanding of it, an affection for it, and the bias of their minds toward it; being written there by the finger of the divine Spirit, according to the covenant of grace, (²⁶¹³Jeremiah 31:33), and not in tables of stone, as the law of Moses, and of which this is not to be understood; but of the law or doctrine of Christ, even the everlasting Gospel; which coming with power, and the Holy Ghost, into the hearts of the Lord's people, is received by them with great approbation and affection, in faith and love; they obey it from their hearts, and are cast into the mould of it:

fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings; either of the Jews, the Scribes and Pharisees, for renouncing a pharisaical righteousness, and embracing the righteousness of Christ; for rejecting the traditions of the elders, the rituals of the ceremonial law, and the doctrine of justification by the works of the moral law; and for cordially receiving the pure Gospel of Christ: or of idolatrous Heathens, from whom they were called, and that for leaving the religion of their country, and the gods of their fathers, and professing the one only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent: or of the antichristian worshippers, and of the man of sin at the head of them, who belches out his blasphemies against God and Christ, his tabernacle and saints; but neither their shocking blasphemies, nor spiteful taunts and jeers, nor menacing words, nor even cruel persecutions, should deter the saints from the profession of Christ and his Gospel.

Ver. 8. *For the moth shall eat them up like a garment*, &c.] Either these reproaches, or the persons that reproach; as a garment is eaten by the moth, secretly, slowly, surely, and at last completely, so that it becomes utterly good for nothing; so secret, gradual, sure and certain, complete and perfect, will be the ruin and destruction of the enemies of Christ and his people:

and the worm shall eat them like wool; or as a woollen garment, which is most liable to be motheaten; for the moth and worm are much the same, as Kimchi and Ben Melech observe; who say, that in the Arabic tongue the moth is called by a name much of the same sound with this word in the text; and the sense is, that as a woollen garment is eaten and consumed by vermin, so wicked men will be destroyed by the vengeance of the Lord

upon them; for the moth and worm design both the judgments of God upon them in this world, and his wrath in the other, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched:

but my righteousness shall be for ever; to justify his people and secure them from wrath and ruin:

and my salvation from generation to generation; it will abide through the endless ages of eternity, and be the portion of the saints for ever, of which they are now heirs; is nearer than when they first believed, and is ready to be revealed, and will be everlastingly enjoyed by them, firm against all the accusations and charges of men and devils: or, “shall not fail”^{f1009}, as the Septuagint; its virtue to justify will always continue; it will answer for the saints in a time to come, even at the last judgment. The Targum is, it

“shall not tarry;”

being near to be wrought out and revealed, (²⁵¹⁶Isaiah 51:5).

Ver. 9. *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, &c.*] The Septuagint and Arabic versions take the words to be an address to Jerusalem; and the Syriac version to Zion, as in (²⁵¹⁷Isaiah 51:17 52:1), but wrongly: they are, as Jarchi says, a prayer of the prophet, or it may be rather of the church represented by him; and are addressed either to God the Father, who, when he does not immediately appear on the behalf of his people, is thought by them to be asleep, though he never slumbers nor sleeps, but always keeps a watchful eye over them; but this they not apprehending, call upon him to “awake”; which is repeated, to show their sense of danger, and of their need of him, and their vehement importunity; and that he would clothe himself with strength, and make it visible, exert his power, and make bare his arm on their behalf: or they are an address to Christ, who is the power of God, that he would appear in the greatness of strength, show himself strong in favour of his people, and take to himself his great power and reign:

awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old; which is mentioned not only as an argument to prevail with the Lord that he would do as he had formerly done; but as an argument to encourage the faith of the church, that as he had done, he could and would still do great things for them:

art thou not it that hath cut Rahab; that is, Egypt, so called either from the pride and haughtiness of its inhabitants; or from the large extent of the country; or from the form of it, being in the likeness of a pear, as some have thought; (see ^{<9804>}Psalm 87:4) and the sense is, art thou not that very arm, and still possessed of the same power, that cut or “hewed” to pieces, as the word ^{f1010} signifies, the Egyptians, by the ten plagues sent among them?

and wounded the dragon? that is, Pharaoh king of Egypt, so called from the river Nile in Egypt, where he reigned, and because of his fierceness and cruelty, (see ^{<3938>}Ezekiel 29:3). So the Targum interprets it of Pharaoh and his army, who were strong as a dragon. And that same mighty arm that destroyed Egypt, and its tyrannical king, can and will destroy that great city, spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, and the beast that has two horns like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon, and to whom the dragon has given his seat, power, and authority; and the rather this may be believed, since the great red dragon has been cast out, or Rome Pagan has been destroyed by him, (^{<6108>}Revelation 11:8 13:2,11 12:3, 9).

Ver. 10. *Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, &c.*] That is, the Red sea, and the deep waters of it; as it did, by causing a strong east wind to blow, which drove the sea back, and made it a dry land, in the midst of which the children of Israel walked as on dry land, (^{<0142>}Exodus 14:21,29) and the same arm and mighty power can and will dry up the waters of the river Euphrates, to prepare the way of the kings of the east, (^{<6162>}Revelation 16:12):

that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? divided the waters of the sea, made a path through them for the Israelites that were redeemed out of Egyptian bondage and slavery, to pass over, and so to go to Canaan’s land.

Ver. 11. *Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, &c.*] Or “and”, or “so”^{f1011}. In like manner, and as sure as the Israelites had a way made for them through the sea to pass over, so sure shall all those that are redeemed by the blood of Christ from sin, Satan, the law, death, and hell, be gathered out of the nations of the world, and from the antichristian states, and shall be converted and turn to the Lord. Or these words are a continuation of the above prayer, as Jarchi, “let them return”; or rather are an answer to it, and a promise that they should:

and come with singing unto Zion; to the Gospel church, and join themselves to it, praising God for his grace in calling and converting them, adoring the riches of his distinguishing love, and singing the new song of redeeming grace; and hereafter they shall return from the grave, and come to Zion above, singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb:

and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; visible in the present state, more so hereafter, when there will be upon them an eternal weight of glory, a crown of life and righteousness:

they shall obtain joy and gladness; by having the presence of God, communion with him, views of interest in Christ, and the gracious influences of the blessed Spirit; all these they enjoy in the church now, but in full perfection hereafter:

and sorrow and mourning shall flee away: either for sin, having the discoveries and application of forgiving love; or on account of desertion, now enjoying the light of God's countenance; or by reason of persecution, which in the latter day glory will entirely cease. But all this will be most fully accomplished in the New Jerusalem church state, and ultimate glory, (~~6204~~ Revelation 21:4). (See Gill on "~~23510~~ Isaiah 35:10").

Ver. 12. *I, even I, am he that comforteth you*, &c.] This is an answer to the prayer of the prophet, or the church by him, in which the Lord promises not only assistance and help, but comfort; not only to exert his power and show his great strength by making bare his arm; but to open his heart, unbosom himself, and show his great love and strong affection for them; and so administer divine comforts unto them, giving more than was asked for: and he promises to do it himself, not by his prophets and ministers, word and ordinances, though these are the usual means; but he himself would do it by his Spirit and grace, and the immediate discoveries of his love; and which he repeats, to show the certainty of it, as well as to point out to their view the great Comforter himself; which is an instance of amazing condescension, and could not fail of exciting admiration and thankfulness in them; (see ~~6008~~ 2 Corinthians 1:3,4),

who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die; a poor faint hearted creature indeed, to be afraid of a frail mortal dying man; which is the case of every man, even of the greatest of men, of the kings and princes of the earth, who all die like other men; the most proud and haughty tyrants, the fierce and furious persecutors of the people of God.

Perhaps the Roman Pagan persecutors may be had in view, whose edicts were very terrible to the first Christians, whose persecutions were very violent and furious, and the tortures and deaths they put them to were very dreadful; and which put them in great fear though they had no reason to fear them that could destroy the body, and do no more; and the rather, since these were mortal men, and did die, and their persecutions came to an end. Or it may be, the man of sin, the son of perdition, antichrist, is here referred to, who in his time has made all to tremble at him, (^{463B}Revelation 13:3,4) but must die, and his power too, and will be destroyed with the breath of Christ's mouth, and the brightness of his coming; and therefore his church and people have no reason to be afraid of him:

and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass; as weak as that, which cannot stand before the scythe, is cut down, and tossed about, and trampled upon, and made hay of, and becomes the food of beasts, (^{490B}Psalm 90:5,6 103:15 ^{230B}Isaiah 40:6). Or the words may be rendered, "and of the son of man, to whom grass shall be given";^{f1012} which if understood of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, of whom the people of the Jews were afraid, and who was a type of antichrist, it was literally true of him, (^{204B}Daniel 4:32,33).

Ver. 13. *And forgettest the Lord thy Maker*, &c.] That he is thy Maker, and therefore is able to protect and preserve thee; when the fear of man prevails God is forgotten, his power, his providence, his promises, and past instances of divine favour and goodness; were these more frequently recollected, considered, and thought of, they would prove an antidote against the fear of men; and especially when it is observed, that he that is our Maker is he

that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; these are amazing works of his hands; and what is it that he cannot do that has made these? these he upholds and maintains in being, and does all things in them as he pleases, and overrules all for his own glory and his people's good, and therefore they have nothing to fear from men; and yet they are afraid of them, such is their distrust and unbelief:

and hast feared continually every day; not only at some certain times, when the enemy has appeared very formidable, and threatened with destruction, or some terrible rumour has been spread, but every day, every hour, and every moment; and to be always in a panic must be very uncomfortable living, as well as very dishonourable:

because of the fury of the oppressor; either the king of Babylon, or antichrist:

as if he were ready to destroy: had drawn his sword, and just going to give the fatal blow:

and where, or “but where”, *is the fury of the oppressor*? where’s the fury of Pharaoh, that great oppressor of God’s Israel formerly? it is gone and vanished like smoke: where’s the fury of Sennacherib king of Assyria, and his army, that threatened Jerusalem with ruin? it was over in a short time, in one night the whole host, or the greater part of it, were destroyed by an angel: and where is, or will be, the fury of the king of Babylon? it will not last always; nor the fury of the antichristian oppressor.

Ver. 14. *The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed*, &c.] The time hastens on, or God will hasten the time, for the release either of the captive Jews in literal Babylon, or of his people in mystical Babylon; or they that are in exile and captivity, as soon as ever opportunity offers for their release, will take it, and make no delay: though some understand the words by way of complaint, as if the persons spoken of were impatient, and could not wait the proper time of their deliverance:

and that he should not die in the pit; in captivity, which was like a pit or grave:

nor that his bread should fail: while in the pit or prison, or on his way home. Musculus interprets all this of Pharaoh, whom he supposes to be the oppressor in the preceding verse, and renders the words,

who hastened going to open, lest he should die in the destruction; who, when he saw the firstborn slain, hastened to open and let Israel go, and was urgent upon them to be gone immediately, lest he and all his people should perish in that calamity:

nor did his bread fail; the bread of the people delivered out of Egypt, so he understands it, but were provided with bread from heaven, all the while they were in the wilderness; and yet this instance of divine power and goodness was greatly forgotten in later times. Jerome applies the whole to Christ, who should quickly come; going and treading down his enemies; opening the way of victory; saving those that are converted, and giving the bread of doctrine to them: but the words are a promise to exiles and prisoners for the sake of Christ and his Gospel, that they should be quickly

loosed and set free, and not die in prison, nor want bread, neither corporeal nor spiritual.

Ver. 15. *But I am the Lord thy God that divided the sea, whose waves roared,* &c.] Referring to the dividing of the Red sea by a violent wind, at which time the waves of it doubtless roared till they were made to stand quietly, as a wall on the right and left, for the Israelites to pass through, as in (²⁵¹⁰Isaiah 51:10). Or this is to be understood of the power of God at any time in stilling and quieting the sea when it rages; which signification the word^{f1013} here used has, as Aben Ezra observes; which power is expressed by a rebuke or reproof of it. And so the Targum,

“I am the Lord thy God, that rebuketh the sea:”

and in like manner the Syriac version; (see ¹⁹⁴⁰Psalm 106:9 ²⁸¹⁰Isaiah 50:2) with which compare (⁴⁰⁸⁰Matthew 8:26). Now he that can do, and oftentimes has done this, can rebuke, restrain, and still the fury of the oppressors, the rage of the persecutors, Rome Pagan or Papal, and deliver out of their hands, (¹⁹⁸⁰Psalm 65:7):

the Lord of hosts is his name: the Lord of armies in heaven and earth, and therefore is able to do these things in a natural, civil, and religious sense.

Ver. 16. *And I have put my words in thy mouth,* &c.] His promises and his truths, either in the mouth of his church, and people for them, both to preserve and transmit to future generations, and to publish and declare to the comfort of each other, (²⁸⁰⁰Isaiah 59:21) or to the Prophet Isaiah, to make known to the people of Israel; or to Christ himself, the great Prophet in Israel, by whom grace and truth are come, and by whom God has spoken all his mind and will, and in whom all the promises are yea and amen. The doctrines of God, and not men, as appears by their truth, purity, harmony and efficacy; they are the words of faith and sound doctrine, of peace and reconciliation, of pardon and righteousness, of salvation and eternal life; and these were put into the mouth of Christ, to be published and declared by him as the great Prophet of the church; for which he was abundantly qualified as man and Mediator, by being anointed with the Holy Ghost, without measure, and by having the tongue of the learned given him: hence he declares, that the doctrine he preached was not his own as man, but his Father’s, and that he spoke nothing of himself, but what he heard of him, and was taught by him, and had a commandment from him to say; and which words or doctrines he delivered to his apostles, and put into

their mouths to make known unto men; (see ^{<43716>}John 7:16 8:26,28 12:49,50 17:8).

And have covered thee in the shadow of my hand; protected and defended both the church and its members, Christ and his ministers, his interest and kingdom, his Gospel, and the truths of it, with its ordinances; and continued them from age to age, notwithstanding the virulence and violence of false teachers and persecutors, (see ^{<3402>}Isaiah 49:2),

that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth; form and establish Gospel churches in the world, in the Roman empire, and elsewhere, both by the words and doctrines of the Gospel; by the ministry of the apostles, and other preachers of the word; and by the hand of almighty power, the efficacious grace of God attending the same: so the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions connect this clause with the former,

by which I have settled the heavens, &c; these are called “heavens”, for their purity, brightness, and glory they have from the Lord; for the doctrines and ordinances of the Gospel, which are from heaven, and not of men; and for the true members of them, which are men born from above, and partakers of the heavenly calling; and for the ministers of the Gospel, those stars of light, which here hold forth the light of the divine word to men; and where the sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings, and where the clouds drop down the rain of heavenly doctrine: these are said to be “planted”, as if they were gardens, as the churches of Christ are, planted with all kind of pleasant plants, with trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified; and these, being watered with the dew of heaven, flourish and bring forth fruit: but planting rather denotes the stability and duration of the churches of Christ, which will continue as long as the days of heaven: or “that thou mayest plant”^{f1014}; referring either to the ministers of the word, who are instruments in planting churches, (^{<4402>}1 Corinthians 3:7,8), or to Christ, the chief master builder and founder of them; though this may principally respect the making of the new heaven, and the new earth, which will be of Christ’s forming and making, (^{<6200>}Revelation 21:1,5) for it is not to be understood of the first making of the heavens and earth in a natural sense, or in a political sense of the settling and establishing of the Jewish nation:

and say unto Zion, thou art my people; the church of God, consisting whether of Jews or Gentiles, especially the latter, who once were not, but

now, being called through the ministry of the word, are the people of God: and more particularly this will be declared and made manifest in the New Jerusalem state, when all the elect of God will be gathered in, (~~6213~~ Revelation 21:3).

Ver. 17. *Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, &c.*] As persons out of a sleep, or out of a stupor, or even out of the sleep of death; for this respects a more glorious state of the church, the Jerusalem, the mother of us all, after great afflictions; and especially if it respects the more glorious state of all on earth, signified by the New Jerusalem, that will be preceded by the resurrection of the dead, called the first resurrection, when the saints will awake out of the dust of the earth, and stand upon their feet; (see ~~2712~~ Daniel 12:2 ~~5146~~ 1 Thessalonians 4:16 ~~6115~~ Revelation 20:5), though the last glorious state of the church, in the spiritual reign of Christ, is also expressed by the rising of the witnesses slain, by their standing on their feet, and by their ascension to heaven, (~~6111~~ Revelation 11:11,12), before which will be a time of great affliction to the church, as here:

which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury; it is no unusual thing in Scripture for the judgments of God, upon a nation and people, or on particular persons, to be signified by a cup, and especially on wicked men, as the effect of divine wrath, (~~3916~~ Psalm 11:6 85:8 ~~2525~~ Jeremiah 25:15,16,17). Here it signifies that judgment that begins at the house and church of God, (~~1047~~ 1 Peter 4:17), which looks as if it arose from the wrath and fury of an incensed God: and though it may greatly intend the wrathful persecutions of men, yet since they are by the permission and will of God, and are bounded and limited by him, they are called “his cup”, and said to come from his hand; and the people of God take them, or consider them as coming by his appointment:

thou hast drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out; alluding to excessive drinking, which brings a trembling of limbs, and sometimes paralytic disorders on men, and to the thick sediments in the bottom of the cup, which are fixed there, as the word ^{f1015} signifies, and are not easily got out, and yet every drop and every dreg are drunk up; signifying, that the whole portion of sufferings, allotted to the Lord’s people, shall come upon them, even what are most disagreeable to them, and shall fill them with trembling and astonishment.

Ver. 18. *There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth, &c.*] Still alluding to drunken persons staggering in the

streets, that can scarcely stand on their feet, and do not know their way, and yet have none to hold them up and guide them, not even of their friends and relations:

neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up; to hold her up from falling, of which there is danger by reeling to and fro, through the intoxicating liquor; and this, either for want of sons, these being dead, or through want of filial affection in them. This was true of Jerusalem, literally understood, at the time of her last destruction by the Romans, when she had no king, priest, nor prophet, to counsel and direct, defend and protect her; and will be the case of the church of God at the slaying of the witnesses, when their own friends will be shy of them, and refuse or neglect to do any kind offices, or show any respect unto them, signified by not suffering their dead bodies to be put into graves, (^(cf. 10) Revelation 11:9).

Ver. 19. *These two things are come unto thee*, &c.] Affliction from the hand of God, though by means of enemies, and no friends to help, support, and comfort, as before hinted: or else this respects what follows, after it is said,

who shall be sorry for thee? lament or bemoan thee? they of the earth will rejoice and be glad, and others will not dare to show any concern outwardly, whatever inward grief may be in their breasts, (^(cf. 10) Revelation 11:10),

desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword; which may be the two things before mentioned, for though there are four words, they are reducible to two things, desolation, which is the sword, and by it, and destruction, which is the famine, and comes by that, as Kimchi observes: or the words may be rendered thus, “desolation, and destruction, even the famine and the sword”; so that there is no need of making these things four, and of considering them as distinct from the other two, as the Targum makes them, which paraphrases the whole thus,

“two tribulations come upon thee, O Jerusalem, thou canst not arise; when four shall come upon thee, spoiling and breach, and the famine and the sword, there shall be none to comfort thee but I.”

All this was literally true of Jerusalem, both at the destruction of it by the Chaldeans and by the Romans, and will be mystically true of the church at the slaying of the witnesses by the sword of antichrist; when there will be a

famine, not of bread, nor of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord; and which will bring great devastation and desolation on the interest of Christ:

by whom shall I comfort thee? there being no ministry of the word, nor administration of the ordinances, the usual means of comfort, the witnesses being slain; (see ^{<500>}Lamentations 1:9,16,21 2:13).

Ver. 20. *Thy sons have fainted,* &c.] Through want of food, or at the desolation made, and have no spirit in them to appear in the interest of true religion:

they lie at the head of all the streets; emaciated by famine, and not able to walk, but drop down in the streets, and there lie panting and pining away; or slain by the enemy; or with the famine, and the sword, as Aben Ezra, and none to bury them; so the dead bodies of the witnesses shall lie in the street of the great city unburied, (^{<6108>}Revelation 11:8,9)

as a wild bull in a net; that is slain, being taken; or, if alive, however it flings about and struggles, cannot extricate itself: so it may denote such that survive the calamity, yet held under the power of the enemy; and though inwardly fretting, and very impatient, cannot help themselves, no more than such a creature taken in a toil or net; which Aben Ezra takes to be a fowl, to which a net best agrees; and the Vulgate Latin version renders it, “as the oryx snared”; which Drusius says is the name of a bird; though it is used for a wild goat. So Aristotle^{f1016} makes mention of it as of the goat kind, and says it has two hoofs, or is cloven footed, and has one horn; and Bochart^{f1017} takes it to be the same with the unicorn of the Scriptures, or the “monoceros”; and, according to some writers^{f1018}, it is a very fierce and bold creature, and not easily taken; and therefore it is no wonder, when it is in the net, that it strives, though in vain, and till it is weary, to get out of it, and yet is obliged to lie there. But Kimchi says the word here used signifies a wild ox or bull^{f1019}, as we render it: in Hebrew it is called “tho” or “thoa”, and very probably is the same with the “thoos” mentioned by Aristotle^{f1020} and Pliny^{f1021}, and is rendered a wild ox in (^{<6545>}Deuteronomy 14:5), where it is reckoned among sheep, goats, and deer. It is strange that the Septuagint should render it, “as beet half boiled”; or flaccid and withering, as the Syriac and Arabic versions, taking it for an herb: and as much out of the way is the Targum, which renders it, “as broken bottles:”

they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God; that is, Jerusalem's sons, the members of the church of God, professors of religion, now full of calamities, which may seem to flow from the wrath of God, and be rebukes in fury, when they are only in love, (⁶⁶¹⁸⁹Revelation 3:19) and from whence they shall be delivered, and their enemies punished, as follows.

Ver. 21. *Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, &c.*] By Babylon, by antichrist and his followers; hear, for thy comfort, the following prophecy:

and drunken, but not with wine; not with wine in a literal sense; nor with the wine of the fornication of the whore of Rome; nor with idolatry, as the kings of the earth are said to be, (⁶⁶¹⁷⁶Revelation 17:2 18:3) but, as the Targum expresses it, with tribulation; with afflictions at the hand of God, and persecutions from men.

Ver. 22. *Thus saith the Lord, the Lord and thy God, &c.*] He who is Lord of all, the eternal Jehovah, who can do all things, and who is the covenant God of his people, and will do all things he has purposed and promised, and which are for their good and his glory; of which they may be assured from the consideration of these names and titles of his, for which reason they seem to be used and mentioned:

that pleadeth the cause of his people, which is a righteous one, as he will make it appear to be, by delivering them out of their troubles, and by avenging their bodies.

Behold, I have taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling; which he himself had put there, (²⁵¹⁷Isaiah 51:17), and which none but himself could take out; not she herself, nor any of her sons, nor indeed could they give her any relief; but when the Lord's time is come to favour his people, he himself will remove it:

even the dregs of the cup of my fury; it shall all be clean taken away, nothing of it shall remain:

thou shalt no more drink it again; or "any longer"^{f1022}; after the slaying of the witnesses, and their rising again, there will be no more persecution of the church of God; (see ²¹⁸⁹Isaiah 2:9 11:9).

Ver. 23. *And I will put it into the hand of them that afflict me, &c.*] As the Lord did to literal Babylon, (²⁵¹⁵Jeremiah 25:15,16), so will he do to

mystical Babylon; he will retaliate upon her all the evils she has done to others, and destroy them that destroyed the earth; (see ^{<66118>}Revelation 11:18 13:10 18:6),

which have said to thy soul, bow down, that we may go over; who not only afflicted the bodies, but tyrannized over the souls and consciences of men; obliging them to a compliance with their idolatrous practices, to bow down and worship the beast, and his image; and thereby acknowledge subjection to the see of Rome, and its authority over them: the allusion seems to be the custom of the eastern kings trampling upon the necks of their conquered enemies, (^{<66102>}Joshua 10:24), and the pope of Rome has, in a literal sense, trampled upon the necks even of kings and emperors.

And thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over; which expresses the low estate of the church of Christ, or holy city, while trodden under foot by the Gentiles during the reign of antichrist, (^{<66112>}Revelation 11:2), and may also denote the sneaking outward compliance of some through the force of persecution, when they did not cordially embrace, nor with conscience, and from their heart, submit to the authority of the church of Rome; but though the people of God are represented in such a low and grovelling condition, yet they shall arise out of it, and come into a very flourishing one, as the next chapter shows.