

# CHAPTER 55

## INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 55

As the two preceding chapters are prophecies of Christ and his church, this treats of his word and ordinances, and of the nature, use, and efficacy of them. It begins with an invitation of thirsty souls to them, (<sup>2850</sup>Isaiah 55:1), an expostulation with them for taking wrong methods, and a dissuasive from them, (<sup>2850</sup>Isaiah 55:2), which is followed with an exhortation to hear the word of Christ, attend on his ordinances; to which they are encouraged with promises of life and covenant blessings, (<sup>2850</sup>Isaiah 55:2,3). Christ is prophesied of in his offices; and the conversion of the Gentiles to him is foretold, (<sup>2850</sup>Isaiah 55:4,5), men are called upon to seek the Lord, where and while he might be found; and both wicked and unrighteous persons, forsaking their ways and thoughts, are encouraged to turn to the Lord, in hopes of pardon, and in consideration of his ways and thoughts not being like theirs, (<sup>2850</sup>Isaiah 55:6-9), the nature and efficacy of the word of God are expressed and illustrated by the similes of rain and snow, (<sup>2850</sup>Isaiah 55:10,11), and the conversion of the Lord's people, in consequence of the word being made effectual, is predicted, the issue of which is the glory of God, (<sup>2850</sup>Isaiah 55:12,13).

**Ver. 1.** *Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, &c.*] These are the words not of the prophet, but of the Lord, as what follows throughout the chapter shows; and are directed to the Gentiles, as Aben Ezra thinks: and indeed their conversion is manifestly spoken of in it; and who, Kimchi says, after the war of Gog and Magog, shall know that the Lord reigns, and shall come and be desirous of learning his judgments and laws. The word "ho" is expressive of calling, as the Jewish commentators rightly observe; and carries in it an invitation, in which there seems to be a commiseration of the case of the persons called and it is delivered in indefinite terms, and very openly and publicly; and has in it the nature of a Gospel call or invitation, to persons described as "thirsty"; not in natural, much less in a sinful sense, but in a spiritual one; thirsting after forgiveness of sin by the blood of Christ; after justification by his righteousness; after salvation by him; after more knowledge of him, more communion with him, and more

conformity to him; and after the milk of the word, and breasts of ordinances; being sensible of sin and danger, and having a spiritual appetite, and a desire after spiritual things. Such as these are persons made alive; are in distress, and sensible of it; and have desires formed in them after divine things: and these are invited and encouraged to “come to the waters”; by which are meant not Christ, though he is as “rivers of water”; and sensible sinners are directed to come to him, and that as in a starving and famishing condition, and having nothing to help themselves with; and such things are to be had of him, which like water are refreshing and reviving, as his grace, and the blessings of it; and which serve to extinguish thirst, and free from it; yet not he, nor the grace of the spirit, are intended, which is often signified by water in Scripture; but rather the ordinances of the Gospel, which are the means of conveying grace, and of refreshing and comforting distressed minds; in order to which, such may come and hear the word, come and partake of all ordinances. The allusion seems to be to such places by the waterside, where ships, laden with provisions, come and unlade; and where persons, by a public crier, are informed of it, and are called to come and buy. So water means the water side, (~~צדוק~~Judges 7:4). Aben Ezra, Jarchi, and Kimchi, interpret them of the law, and the doctrines of it; and so the Targum,

“ho, everyone that would learn, let him come and learn;”

but the Gospel, and the doctrines and ordinances of that, seem rather designed:

*and he that hath no money*; not in a natural, but in a spiritual sense: unconverted persons have nothing to support themselves or pay off their debts with, though they fancy they have, and that they are rich, and stand in need of nothing; but sensible souls know they have none, and that they are poor and needy; yet these are invited to come where provisions are to be had, since they are to be had at free cost:

*come ye, buy and eat*; come to the ordinances, partake of them freely, and feed upon the provisions therein made:

*come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price*; by wine and milk are meant the Gospel and its doctrines, compared to good old generous wine, for the antiquity of them, and for their being of a reviving and refreshing nature; and to “milk”, for its purity and sweetness, and for its cooling and nourishing nature, and because easy of digestion; these are

to be bought, and not to be sold. (~~1223~~ Proverbs 23:23), but not in a proper sense; no valuable consideration can be given for them, for they are of more worth than thousands of gold and silver; nor have we anything to give to God for them, and the blessings of grace conveyed by them, which is not his own, or can be profitable to him; but in an improper sense, when something thought valuable is parted with for them, as sinful and righteous self, and even everything in life, when called for, and that itself; these are bought without any money or price on our part; they are freely given and received; and on this basis may men expect them, and have them. The Targum is,

“he that hath no silver, come, hear and learn; come, hear and learn, without price and money, doctrine better than wine and milk.”

**Ver. 2.** *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?* &c.] Lavish away time, opportunities, and strength, in reading and hearing false doctrine, which is not bread, but chaff; is not wholesome, does not nourish, but is harmful and destructive; eats as does a canker, instead of feeding and refreshing; such as the vain philosophy of the Gentiles, the traditions of the Jews, and the errors and heresies of false teachers:

*and your labour for that which satisfieth not?* labouring to seek for happiness in worldly things, which is not to be had; or to obtain righteousness by the works of the law, which is not to be attained to in that way; all such labour is in vain, no satisfaction is enjoyed, nor peace and comfort had, nor any solid food; these are husks which swine eat:

*hearken diligently unto me;* not the prophet, but the Lord himself. The Targum renders it,

“my Word;”

the essential Word, Christ Jesus, hearken to his doctrine, which is bread, and of a satisfying nature:

*and eat ye that which is good;* not the law, as the Jewish commentators; but the good word of God, the Gospel, which being found and eaten by faith, or mixed with faith by them that hear it, and so digested, is the joy and rejoicing of the heart:

*and let your soul delight itself in fatness;* in the goodness and fatness of the Lord’s house, attending on the word and ordinances with spiritual

pleasure and delight; and which is the way to become fat and flourishing in spiritual things; (see <sup><BR></sup>Psalm 36:8 65:4).

**Ver. 3.** *Incline your ear, and come unto me,* &c.] The exhortations are repeated, to show the importance of them, how welcome these persons were to the Lord, and to his house, and his earnest and tender care and concern for them:

*hear, and your soul shall live;* or, “that your soul may live<sup>f1096</sup>”; spiritually and eternally. There must be life before hearing; men must be made alive before they can come to Christ spiritually, or hear his word so as to have a spiritual understanding of it, or savingly believe it; but the meaning is, that by coming and hearing the word of the Lord, they should have something to live upon, good, solid, substantial food; and that they should live comfortably and plentifully, and that for ever. It was reckoned a great absurdity in Sunlungus, a Chinese philosopher, who asserted<sup>f1097</sup> that a man had three ears, one different from the two that are seen; it is true in a spiritual sense.

*And I will make an everlasting covenant with you;* which is to be understood not of the covenant of works, nor of the covenant of circumcision, nor of the Sinai covenant; but of the covenant of grace, which is an “everlasting one”; it is from everlasting, being founded in the everlasting love of God, is according to his eternal purposes; Christ is the Mediator of it, who as such was set up from everlasting, and the promises and blessings of it were so early put into his hands; and it will continue to everlasting, sure, firm, unalterable, and immovable. This, properly speaking, was made with Christ from all eternity, and his people in him; it is made manifest to them at conversion, when they are shown it, and their interest in it; when God makes himself known to them as their covenant God, and Christ as the Mediator of it is revealed to them; when the Lord puts his Spirit into them, and makes them partakers of the grace of it; shows them their interest in the blessings of it, and opens and applies the promises of it unto them; and these are made manifest in the ministration of the Gospel, and in the administration of ordinances: even “the sure mercies of David”; that is, the Messiah, the son of David, and his antitype, whence he is often called by his name, (<sup><BR></sup>Ezekiel 34:23,24 37:24,25 <sup><BR></sup>Hosea 3:5), and so Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and others<sup>f1098</sup>, interpret it. The blessings of the covenant are called “mercies”, because they spring from the mercy of God, as redemption, pardon of sin, regeneration, salvation, and eternal

life; and they are the mercies of David, or of Christ, for the promises of them were made to him, and the things themselves put into his hands, and are ratified and confirmed by his blood, and through him come to his people: and these are “sure”, firm, and steadfast, through the faithfulness and holiness of God, who has given them to Christ; through being in a covenant ordered in all things and sure; and also being in the hands of Christ, in whom the promises are yea and amen, and the blessings sure to all the seed; (see ~~4433~~ Acts 13:34).

**Ver. 4.** *Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people,* &c.] That is, the Messiah, as Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Ben Melech rightly interpret it. This respects an act past in eternity, in God’s eternal purposes and decrees, when he appointed Christ to the office of a Mediator; and this was an act of his grace, a free gift of his, flowing from his love to his people, both Jews and Gentiles, even all his elect, to whom Christ is a “witness”, both of his father and of himself: of his father, of his good will to men, in forming the scheme of their salvation; of his love to sinners, in the mission of him; of his justice and holiness, which appear in his being the propitiation for sin; of his truth in his promises; of his whole mind and will, with respect to doctrine and worship: he is a witness of himself; of his deity and perfections; of his divine and eternal sonship; of his existence before his incarnation; of his Messiahship; of the end of his coming into the world; of his sufferings, death, and resurrection; of his second coming; and of the several characters he bears: he is a witness of the covenant itself, as well as the surety, Mediator, and messenger of it, and of truth in general; to which he has bore witness by his word and doctrines; by his works and miracles; by his sufferings and death; by the Scriptures of truth; by his Gospel, and the ministers of it; and by his spirit, and a faithful witness he is:

*a leader and commander to the people;* he is a “leader”, as he is a teacher of his people, who teaches them to profit, and leads them in the way they should go; as a king that guides his subjects with the skilfulness of his hands, as David the type of him did; as a general leads out and on his armies to battle; as a shepherd leads his flock to good pastures; as a guide to those that know not the way; and as one that goes before others by way of example: Christ leads his people out of their own ways into his ways; and he leads them in a right way to the city of their habitation, to heaven at last; and he leads them on gradually and gently, as they are able to bear. He is a “commander” in a military way, a wise, powerful, valiant, and courageous one, and always victorious; and in a political sense, as a King

commands his subjects, whose commands are to be obeyed; and indeed they are written on the hearts of his people; they are not grievous, though they cannot be performed in their own strength; nor is it designed that life and salvation should be obtained by the observance of them, but are done to testify subjection to Christ, and gratitude to him. The Targum is,

“behold, I have appointed him a Prince to the people, a King, and a ruler over all kingdoms.”

**Ver. 5.** *Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not,* &c.] And even nations, as in the next clause; not all the individuals of them, though the Gospel is sent to all nations; and in the latter day the kingdoms of this world shall be the Lord’s, and all nations shall serve him. It denotes a great concourse of people to Christ, even such as were not known by him: he knows all mankind as he is the omniscient God, and especially them that are his, these he has a special and peculiar knowledge of; he knows them as his beloved, chosen, and redeemed ones, even before conversion; and yet, in a sense, they are unknown to him before calling; they are not taken notice of by him in an open way; they are not owned and acknowledged to be his; there is no intimacy between them; they are not admitted to fellowship and communion with him. The phrase denotes them to be a foreign people, and so properly describes the Gentiles, who were without Christ, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. These, Jehovah the Father says, for these are his words to his Son, he shall “call”; not merely with an external call, by the ministry of the word, though this is Christ’s call, and is the means of bringing souls to him; but sometimes this is a call of persons who are not chosen and saved, and is of no effect; but with the internal call, by his Spirit and grace, which is according to the purpose of God, and is peculiar to his elect; is the fruit of love, and by special grace, and to special blessings; is by the power of God, and is irresistible, unfrustrable, and irreversible: hence the following effect,

*and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee;* knew not even God himself, as the Gentiles did not, much less the Messiah; they knew neither his person nor his offices, nor the way of peace, life, and salvation by him; were in a state of gross darkness; and to whom the Gospel was not known, which is a revelation of Christ, and of good things by him. Now the promise is, that, upon the above call, such persons should “run” unto Christ; light goes along with that call, directing to the object, where all grace and salvation be; life is infused, by which they are quickened, and

move; and strength is given, by which they stand upon their feet, walk and run; efficacious grace, then exerted, draws them; and under a sense of danger, and in a view of safety in Christ, they run with all readiness and cheerfulness to him, and lay hold on him the hope set before them. The Targum adds,

“to bring tribute unto thee.”

*Because of the Lord thy God*; because of the love of God, with which they are drawn; and because of his power, which is put forth upon them; because of his grace, and the proclamations of it in Christ, and the declaration of his will, that whoever believes in him shall have everlasting life; and because he has appointed Christ, and him only, to be their Saviour and Redeemer; and because there is no coming to God but by him:

*for the Holy One of Israel*; or, “and” or “even to the Holy One of Israel”<sup>f1099</sup>; that is, Christ, who is holy in his natures and offices, and the sanctifier of his people; to him shall they run, for the cleansing of their filthy souls in the fountain of his blood; and for the expiation of their sin and guilt, by his atoning sacrifice; and for righteousness and strength; for grace, and all the supplies of it; for peace, pardon, and eternal life:

*for he hath glorified thee*; that is, God the Father has glorified his Son, through the miracles wrought by him in his state of humiliation; by supporting him, as man, in his work, and under all his sufferings; and by raising him from the dead, and at his ascension to heaven; and by bestowing on him the gifts of the Spirit without measure, to give to others; which, with the reasons before suggested, induce, engage, and encourage sons to run to Christ, when called by his grace. Some understand all this of the first Christian church, consisting of believing Jews, who should call the Gentiles by her ministers unto Christ, by the conversion and accession of which she would be glorified. These nations are those the apostles were sent and preached unto, after the resurrection of Christ, all the nations of the world, even most distant and remote; and particularly those the Apostle Paul preached unto from Jerusalem, round about to Illyricum; and which the ministers of the word preached unto, in the first ages of the Gospel; such as those mentioned by Tertullian<sup>f1100</sup> in his time, as the Parthians, Medea, Elamites; the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, and Pamphylia; the Egyptians, Africans, Romans, Getulians, Moors, Spaniards, Gauls, Britons, Sarmatians, Dacians, Germans, and Sythians; besides many other nations, provinces,

and isles unknown, too many to enumerate, who professed the name of Christ; and yet more, when the whole Roman empire became Christian, in the times of Constantine; to which may be added the various kingdoms in Europe, which cast off the Romish yoke at the Reformation; together with many of the American nations, or new found world, who now embrace and profess the Christian religion.

**Ver. 6.** *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found*, &c.] The Lord is to be sought unto at all times, whenever the people of God meet together, especially on sabbath days, and while the external ministry of the word lasts, and life itself; so the Targum,

“seek the fear of the Lord, while ye are alive.”

Kimchi compares it with (~~2000~~ Ecclesiastes 9:10). The Jewish writers, as Aben Ezra and others, generally interpret it before the sealing of the decree, or before the decree is gone forth. It may be understood of place, as well as time, and be rendered, “seek the Lord in the place where he may be found”<sup>f1101</sup>; God is to be found, as Aben Ezra observes, in all places, and at all times; under the Old Testament there was a particular place appointed for the worship of God, the tabernacle and temple, where he was to be sought unto, and might be found; under the New Testament, all places are alike, and wherever the church and people of God meet together, there he is to be sought, and there he may be found, even in his house and ordinances:

*call ye upon him while he is near*; the same thing designed by different words: seeking and calling design not only prayer, but the whole of public worship, and the time and place when and where the Lord is to be found, and is near. Aben Ezra thinks it refers to the Shechinah in the sanctuary. Perhaps it may have some respect to the time of Christ’s incarnation, and his being in the land of Judea; and to the destruction of the temple by the Romans, when the Lord could be no more sought unto, and found in that place; or when the Christians were obliged to move from Jerusalem, because of the siege of it; and when the Jews had no more an opportunity of hearing the Gospel there.

“seek the Lord, where he is found, in the synagogues, and in the schools; call upon him, where he is near, in the synagogues, and in the schools.” And so another Jewish writer, mentioned by him, interprets the words, “whilst the Shechinah is found in the



sanctuary; before he hides his face, and causes his Shechinah to remove from you.”

**Ver. 7.** *Let the wicked forsake his way, &c.*] His evil way, as the Targum paraphrases it, his wicked course of life; and which is his own way, of his own choosing, and in which he delights, and a very dangerous one it is; and yet he is bent upon it, and nothing can turn him from it but efficacious grace; nor will he ever forsake it till he sees the evil, danger, and loathsomeness of it; and when he does forsake it, it is so as not to make sin the course of his life, though he does not and cannot live without sin. The word for “wicked” signifies restless, troublesome, and ungodly, and is expressive of the pollution and guilt of sin all are under. Some are notoriously wicked, and all men are wicked in the account of God, though they may think otherwise themselves; and they become so their own apprehensions, when they are thoroughly awakened and convinced of sin, and of the evil of their ways, and are enabled to forsake them: though this may also be understood of “his own way” of saving himself, which is by works of righteousness he has done, in opposition to God’s way of saving men by Jesus Christ; which way of his own must be relinquished, and Christ alone must be applied unto, and laid hold on, for salvation:

*and the unrighteous man his thoughts:* not his natural thoughts, but his sinful ones, his wrong thoughts of religion, righteousness, and salvation; particularly his thoughts of being justified by his own righteousness; which thoughts are to be forsaken, as being contrary to God’s way of justifying sinners; and as all men are unrighteous, are destitute of righteousness, and full of unrighteousness, so is the self-righteous person; and he must be divested of all thoughts of his own righteousness, and acknowledge himself an unrighteous man, ere he receives mercy, forgiveness, righteousness and salvation, at the hands of the Lord:

*and let him return unto the Lord;* from whom he has departed, against whom he has sinned, and who only can save him; and this he does when he comes and acknowledges his sin before the Lord, implores his grace and mercy, and attends his word and worship; all which is the fruit and effect of powerful and efficacious grace, in turning and drawing. The Targum is,

“and let him turn to the worship of the Lord:”

*and he will have mercy upon him;* which shows that the returning of the sinner to God is not meritorious, it is mercy still to receive him; and which

is here mentioned as the motive to return; there is an abundance of it with the Lord, and he has resolved and promised to show it, and he takes delight in it, and many are the instances of it:

*and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;* God is to be applied unto, not as an absolute God, or out of Christ; but as our God in Christ, in whom he has proclaimed his name, a God gracious and merciful, and so he does abundantly pardon. The promise of pardon is absolute and unconditional, and is here observed as the motive to forsake sin, and not that as the condition of pardon; the design is to comfort those that are distressed with sin; God does and will pardon, and none but he can, and he has declared that he will; forgiveness is with him, and it is published in the Gospel, and there have been many instances of it.

*The Lord does abundantly pardon,* or “multiply to pardon”<sup>f1102</sup>; he pardons all sorts of sinners, and all sorts of sins; original sin, actual sins and transgressions; all backslidings and revoltings; all but the sin against the Holy Ghost.

**Ver. 8.** *For my thoughts are not your thoughts,* &c.] In some things there may be a likeness between the thoughts of God and the thoughts of men, as to the nature of them: thoughts are natural and essential to them both; they are within them, are internal acts, and unknown to others, till made known; but then the thoughts of men are finite and limited, whereas the thoughts of the Lord are infinite and boundless; men’s thoughts have a beginning, but the Lord’s have none; though not so much the nature as the quality of them is here intended: the thoughts of men are evil, even the imagination of their thoughts, yea, every imagination is, and that always and only so; but the thoughts of God are holy, as appears from his purposes and covenant, and all his acts of grace, in redemption, calling, and preparing his people for glory: the thoughts of men, as to the object of them, are vain, and nothing worth; their thoughts and sentiments of things are very different from the Lord’s, as about sin, concerning Christ, the truths of the Gospel, the people of God, religion, holiness, and a future state, and in reference to the business of salvation; they think they can save themselves; that their own works of righteousness are sufficient to justify them; their privileges and profession such, that they shall be saved; their wisdom, riches, and honour, a security to them from damnation: however, that their sincere obedience, with repentance for what is amiss, will entitle them to happiness: but the thoughts of God are the reverse of all this; particularly with respect to

pardoning mercy their thoughts are different; carnal men think of mercy, but not of justice, and of having pardoning mercy in an absolute way, and not through Christ, and without conversion and repentance; and so this is a reason why men's thoughts are to be forsaken, because so very unlike to the Lord's. Or else these words are to be considered as an argument, proving that God does abundantly pardon all returning sinners; since he is not like men, backward to forgive, especially great and aggravated crimes, but is ready, free, and willing to forgive, even those of the most aggravated circumstances.

*Neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord;* the ways which God prescribes and directs men to walk in are different from theirs; his are holy, theirs unholy; his are plain, theirs crooked; his are ways of light, theirs ways of darkness; his are pleasant, theirs not so, at least in the issue; his lead to life, theirs to death; and therefore there is good reason why they should leave their evil ways, and walk in his. Moreover, the ways which he takes in the salvation of men are different from those which they, naturally pursue, and especially in the pardon of sin; he pardons freely, fully, without any reserve, or private grudge, forgetting as well as forgiving.

**Ver. 9.** *For as the heavens, are higher than the earth, &c.]* Than which there cannot be conceived a greater distance:

*so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts;* which may denote the heavenliness of the ways and thoughts of God, the eternity and unsearchableness of them, and their excellency and preciousness; as well as the very great distance between his ways and thoughts and men's which this is designed to illustrate.

**Ver. 10.** *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, &c.]* Rain and snow come down from the clouds in the heavens, and do not return again until they have done what they are sent to do, or have produced the following effects; otherwise they may be exhaled into vapours, as they often are, and drawn up again by the sun:

*but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud;* or, "inebriateth the earth"<sup>f1103</sup>; soaks into it, and reaches the seed that is sown in it, and causes that to spring up, and rise into stalk and ear:

*that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater;* produce a sufficiency for food both for man and beast, and enough for seed to sow the ground with the following year.

**Ver. 11.** *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth, &c.]* My good word, as the Targum; this may either be understood of Christ, the eternal Word, who is called the Word of God, and may be said to go forth out of his mouth, being spoken of by all his holy prophets, since the world began, whose coming was like the rain or snow, (<sup>308B</sup>Hosea 6:3), he came from heaven, from his Father there, and as a free gift of his, and in consequence of a decree, as the rain does; the manner of his coming, like that, was suddenly, gratefully, and with great efficacy, watering his people with his grace, through the ministry of the word, and making them fruitful; and though he returned to heaven again, yet not empty, without fruit and effect; he produced a large harvest of souls, and procured all blessings of grace for them, and accomplished the whole will and pleasure of God, in effecting the salvation of his people; and the pleasure of the Lord prospered in his hand: or else it may be interpreted of God's word of promise; the promises are made in heaven, and come from thence as the rain and snow do; are the gifts of God's grace; are very refreshing and reviving, as rain to the earth; and are always effectual, being yea and amen in Christ Jesus; and being made good, fulfil purposes, or the good will and pleasure of God; particularly promises concerning Christ, pardon and peace through him; such as are given forth in this chapter: or rather it may be meant of the word of the Gospel, which is of God; comes from heaven; is a blessing grace; falls according to divine direction here and there; carries not for the expectations, desires, or deserts of men; falls in great plenty; and is a blessing wherever it comes: it is the means of softening the hard hearts of men; of cooling the conscience set on fire by the law, and allaying the heat of divine wrath there; and of refreshing and reviving drooping, disconsolate, and weary souls: it is the means of the first buddings of grace in the Lord's people, and of the larger exercises and flourishings of it, and of all fruitfulness in good works: it is productive of seed to Christ the sower, and fruit to his ministers who labour under him, and of bread to the eater, the believer, whom it furnishes with the bread of life to feed upon by faith:

*it shall not return to me void;* it is accompanied with a divine energy; it is the power of God to salvation:

*but it shall accomplish that which I please;* in the conversion of sinners, and comfort of saints:

*and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it:* whether it be the savour of life unto life, or the savour of death unto death; whether for the quickening of sinners, and reviving of saints; or whether for the hardening of men, and leaving them without excuse to perish in their sins, both in the Jewish and Gentile world.

**Ver. 12.** *For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace, &c.]* Though these words may literally respect the Jews' return from captivity to their own land, attended with joy and peace; as the preceding verse may respect the word of promise concerning it; as it is interpreted by the Targum,

“for with joy shall ye go out from among the people, and with peace shall ye be brought to your own land;”

yet they may be spiritually applied to the conversion of men, in consequence of the word being made effectual, of which the deliverance from the Babylonish thralldom was a type; when men “go out” of a state of bondage to sin, Satan, and the law; out of a state of darkness and ignorance; out of the pit of nature's misery and distress; out of themselves and their own righteousness; out of their own sinful ways, and from among the men of the world: and though here is a divine power exerted in all this, yet they go out freely, being led by the Spirit of God; who takes them by the hand as it were, and leads them in ways before unknown to them; he leads them to Christ, his person, fulness, blood, and righteousness; to the house of God, and to the ordinances of it; and from one degree of grace to another, till he brings them to glory: all which is attended with “joy and peace” to themselves; finding themselves released from bondage, in a state of light and comfort, out of the horrible pit, and on a rock; brought to Christ, and clothed with his righteousness; to the angels in heaven, who rejoice over every sinner that repenteth; to the ministers of the Gospel, who are the instruments of their conversion; and to all the saints into whose fellowship they are brought; which joy is further illustrated by the following strong figures:

*the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing;* or the people that dwell upon them: and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands; or clap with their branches; as the Targum, the tops of them, being moved with gentle breezes of wind, bow themselves, and the branches intertwining and clasping each other like hands and arms. Kimchi observes, that “mountains and hills” may signify the kings of the nations;

and “the trees of the field” the people rejoicing at the deliverance of the Jews, as they pass along: it may be as well applied to the ministers of the word, and common believers rejoicing at the conversion of sinners, in whom as wonderful a change is wrought, as in the following cases. Vitringa interprets this of the apostles and ministers of the word going forth into the Gentile world, attended with joy in themselves, and among the converts there.

**Ver. 13.** *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, &c.*] The meaning of which either is, that instead of wicked men, comparable to briars and thorns for their being fruitless and useless, harmful and pernicious, under a curse, and their end to be burned, there good men, comparable to fruitful and beautiful trees, shall be; which was eminently true when the Gospel was preached in the Gentile world; (see <sup><3801></sup>Isaiah 35:1-10 41:19,20) so the Targum,

“instead of the ungodly shall rise up righteous persons, and instead of sinners shall rise up such as are afraid to sin;”

or else the sense is, that such who are like briars and thorns in their nature state, being no better than others, but children of wrath, even as others, shall by the grace of God be made like fir and myrtle trees; as great a change shall be wrought in them as if briars and thorns were changed into fir and myrtle trees; to which the saints are sometimes compared, particularly to myrtle trees, (<sup><3010></sup>Zechariah 1:10), because goodly to look at, of a sweet smell, ever green, flourish in watery places, and bring forth fruit:

*and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off;* that is, these persons, who are become and made like to fir and myrtle trees, shall be called by the name of the Lord, shall bear his name, support his Gospel and interest, and be for his praise, and to the glory of his grace, who has done such great and wonderful things for them;

*and shall be for an everlasting sign* and monument of the love, grace, power, and faithfulness of God, and for a sure token that the church and people of God shall not be cut off, but that God will have a people to serve him as long as the sun and moon endure.