

PSALM 74

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 74

Maschil of Asaph.

Some think that Asaph, the penman of this psalm, was not the same that lived in the times of David, but some other of the same name, a descendant of his ^{f1046}, that lived after the Babylonish captivity, since the psalm treats of things that were done at the time the Jews were carried captive into Babylon, or after; but this hinders not that it might be the same man; for why might he not, under a spirit of prophecy, speak of the sufferings of the church in later ages, as well as David and others testify before hand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow? The psalm is called “Maschil”, because it gives knowledge of, and causes to understand what afflictions should befall the church and people of God in later times. The Targum is,

“a good understanding by the hands of Asaph.”

Some think the occasion of the psalm was the Babylonish captivity, as before observed, when indeed the city and temple were burnt; but then there were prophets, as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and after them Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; which is here denied, (~~3974~~ Psalm 74:9), others think it refers to the times of Antiochus Epiphanes; but though prophecy indeed had then ceased, and the temple was profaned, yet not burnt. The Jews apply it to their present captivity, and to the profanation of the temple, by Titus ^{f1047}, and to the destruction both of the city and temple by him; so Theodoret: the title of it in the Syriac version is,

“when David saw the angel slaying the people, and he wept and said, on me and my seed, and not on these innocent sheep; and again a prediction of the siege of the city of the Jews, forty years after the ascension, by Vespasian the old man, and Titus his son, who killed multitudes of the Jews, and destroyed Jerusalem; and hence the Jews have been wandering to this day.”

But then it is not easy to account for it why a psalm of lamentation should be composed for the destruction of that people, which so righteously came upon them for their sins, and particularly for their contempt and rejection of the Messiah. It therefore seems better, with Calvin and Cocceius, to suppose that this psalm refers to the various afflictions, which at different times should come upon the church and people of God; and perhaps the superstition, wickedness, and cruelty of the Romish antichrist, may be hinted at.

Ver. 1. *O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?* etc.]. This the church supposed because of the prevalence, oppression, and triumph of the enemy, because of the hardships and afflictions she laboured under, and because of the hidings of the face of God from her, which unbelief interpreted of a casting off; (see ^{<4970>}Psalm 77:7) when in reality it was not so, only in appearance, and according to a wrong judgment made of things; for God never did nor never will cast off, nor cast away, his people whom he foreknew, (^{<5100>}Romans 11:1,2),

why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? the people of God are called “sheep”, because subject to go astray, not only before conversion, but after; and because harmless and inoffensive in their lives and conversations; and because, though exposed to the insults and persecutions of men, and their butcheries and barbarities, and therefore called “the flock of slaughter”, (^{<3810>}Zechariah 11:4,7), yet bear all patiently, as the sheep before her shearers is dumb; and because like sheep they are weak and timorous, unable to defend themselves; are clean, and so distinguished from dogs and swine; and are profitable, though not to God, yet to men, and one another; and like sheep are sociable, and love to be together: and they are called the sheep of the Lord’s pasture; because he provides good pasture for them, leads them into it, and feeds them himself with Christ, the bread of life, the tree of life, and hidden manna; with covenant grace and promises, even the sure mercies of David; with discoveries of his love and grace, and with his word and ordinances; and yet these, when under afflictions and desertions, are ready to conclude that God is angry with them, yea, is very angry; that his anger burns against them, and his fierce wrath goes over them, signified by smoking; (see ^{<6620>}Deuteronomy 19:20), alluding to men, who, when they are angry, become hot, as Kimchi observes, and their breath like smoke comes out of their nostrils.

Ver. 2. *Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old,* etc.] Alluding to the redemption of the congregation of Israel out of Egypt, when they were said to be “purchased”, (^{<42516>}Exodus 15:16) and as that people were typical of the people of God, they may be said to be “purchased then”, even of old; though the purchase in reality was not made till the blood of Christ was shed, with which he purchased his church, (^{<4018>}Acts 20:28), indeed he was the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, in the purpose and promise of God, and in the typical sacrifices so early offered up, (^{<6618>}Revelation 13:8), and besides, the words may be considered as the words of the church of God groaning under antichristian oppression and cruelty, hundreds of years since the death of Christ, and so may be said to be of old purchased; and which is called a “congregation”, because a select number, chosen of God, and called out of the world, and brought into one body, and into fellowship with Christ and one another; and though they may not meet together in one place, they are all of one body, and will one day make one general assembly and church of the firstborn, called “the congregation of the righteous”, (^{<3005>}Psalm 1:5) now it is desired of the Lord for these, that they might be remembered with his lovingkindness and tender mercies, with his covenant and promises, and be delivered and saved out of the hands of their enemies:

the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; the Targum adds, out of Egypt; but this is to be understood not of the redemption of the people of Israel, but of the redemption of the church of God from sin, Satan, the law, the world, hell, and death; who are chosen by the Lord for his inheritance, his peculiar treasure and portion; and which he highly values and esteems, and is dear unto him as such, as the redemption of them by the blood of Christ shows:

this Mount Sion wherein thou hast dwelt; meaning the church of God, which often goes by this name, both in the Old and in the New Testament, comparable to the mount of Zion for its height, holiness, and immoveableness; where the Lord has promised to dwell, and where he does dwell, and will for evermore. As the reference to Sion literally understood, it is called “this Sion”, because well known, and because the psalm might be composed or said in it, as Kimchi observes; and which shows that it was written before the destruction of the city and temple, and while Zion was the seat of religious worship, and therefore a prophecy of future times.

Ver. 3. *Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations*, etc.] That is, arise, hasten, move swiftly, and in the greatness of strength, and come and see the desolations made by the enemy, which look as if they would remain for ever; meaning either the desolations made in the city and temple of Jerusalem, either by Nebuchadnezzar, or by Titus; or the havocs and devastations made in the church of God by the tyranny and persecutions of antichrist; which have continued so long, that an end of them has been almost despaired of. So Jacob is said to “lift up his feet”; which we render went on his way, (~~Q291~~Genesis 29:1). Some take these words in a different sense, as a prayer for the destruction of the church’s enemies; so the Targum,

“lift up thy feet or goings, to make desolate the nations for ever;”

and Kimchi makes but one sentence of this and the following clause, and reads it thus,

“lift up thy feet, to make desolate for ever every enemy that does wickedly in the sanctuary:”

but the accent “athnach”, which divides propositions, and is upon the word **j xn**, forbids such a reading. The former sense is best, and most agreeable to the context;

even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary; by profaning and destroying the temple, as did Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, and Titus; or by antichrist sitting in the temple and church of God, setting up idolatrous worship in it, and blaspheming the tabernacle of God, and those that dwell therein, (~~S114~~2 Thessalonians 2:4 ~~G176~~Revelation 13:6).

Ver. 4. *Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations*, etc.]

Particular churches, gathered out of the world in Gospel order, and which meet together at particular times and places; in the midst of these, and against them their enemies, and who are the Lord’s enemies, roar like lions, as Satan, and bloody persecutors, and particularly antichrist, whose mouth is the mouth of a lion, which is opened in blasphemy against God and his people, (~~G177~~Revelation 13:2,5,6),

they set up their ensigns for signs; or “signs”, “signs”, false ones for true ones; meaning either military signs, as the Roman eagle, set as signs and trophies of victory; or idolatrous statues and images, such an one as Antiochus brought into the temple; or false miracles and antichristian

marks, in the room of true miracles, and the true mark of Christ's followers; (see ^{<3119>}2 Thessalonians 2:9 ^{<6134>}Revelation 13:14,16 14:1). The Jewish writers generally interpret it of the divinations and superstitions rites used by the king of Babylon, when he was coming up against Jerusalem, (^{<3212>}Ezekiel 21:21).

Ver. 5. *A man was famous*, etc.] Or, "it was", or "is known"^{f1048}; the desolations the enemy made, the wickedness they committed, the terror they spread, and the signs they set in the sanctuary of the Lord:

according as he had lifted up, or "as one that lifts up"

axes upon the thick trees^{f1049}; that is, the above things were as visible, and as well known, being as easy to be seen as such an action is, a man being obliged to lift his axe above his head, to cut down a thick tree: or rather the sense is, formerly a man was famous for, and it gave him some credit and esteem, to be an hewer of wood in the forest of Lebanon, where he lifted up his axe, and cut down the thick trees for the building of the temple, as the servants of Hiram king of Tyre did; and such an action was esteemed as if a man brought an offering to God; agreeably to which is Kimchi's note,

"when the temple was built, he who lifted up his axe upon a thick tree, to cut it down for the building, was known, as if he lifted it up above in heaven before the throne of glory; all so rejoiced and gloried in the building:"

and Aben Ezra interprets it of acclamations made above on that account. The words, according to the accents, should be rendered thus, "he" or "it was known, as he that lifteth up on high; even as he that lifteth up on high, axes upon the thick tree".

Ver. 6. *But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.*] Formerly it was an honour to be employed in cutting down a tree for the building of the temple; but now so little regard was paid to it, that all its fine carved work, which Solomon made, (^{<1068>}1 Kings 6:18,29,30), was demolished at once in a rude and furious manner with axes and hammers; which was done either by the Chaldeans in Nebuchadnezzar's time, or by the Syrians in the times of Antiochus, or by the Romans in the times of Vespasian; the first seems intended; (see ^{<2442>}Jeremiah 46:22,23).

Ver. 7. *They have cast fire into thy sanctuary*, etc.] Or, “thy sanctuary into the fire”^{f1050}; which denotes the utter destruction of it by fire, which was done both by the Chaldean and Roman armies; (see ^{<1279>}2 Kings 25:9 ^{<1277>}Matthew 22:7),

they have defiled, by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground, or “to the earth they have defiled the habitation of thy name”^{f1051}; that is, to the last and lowest degree; this Antiochus did when he set up an idol in the temple, and Titus when he laid it level with the ground, not leaving one stone upon another, as our Lord predicted, (^{<1248>}Matthew 24:1,2) the aggravation of which was, that it was the place where the Lord had put his name, where his name was called upon, and where was the symbol of his presence.

Ver. 8. *They said in their hearts, let us destroy them together*, etc.] The Targum is,

“their children, are together;”

or “their kindred”, as the Septuagint Vulgate Latin, Ethiopic, and Arabic versions, taking the word to be of $\hat{y}n$, which signifies a “son”; and the sense to be, that seeing they were all together, as the Jews were at the taking of Jerusalem, they might be cut off at once. Jarchi explains it of their rulers; Marinus, as Aben Ezra observes, derives it from a word which signifies to afflict and oppress, to which he agrees; (see ^{<1383>}Psalm 83:3-5),

they have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land; not only in Jerusalem, where there were, the Jewish^{f1052} writers say, four hundred and sixty, and others four hundred and eighty of them, but also in all the land of Judea; of these synagogues there is much mention made in the New Testament; they were places for public worship, in which, prayer was made, and the Scriptures were read and explained; (see ^{<1015>}Matthew 6:5 ^{<1046>}Luke 4:16 ^{<1152>}Acts 15:21), but it may be doubted whether they are meant here, since it does not appear that there were any until after the return of the Jews from Babylon^{f1053}; the temple, and the parts of it, may be meant, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra; or the schools of the prophets; though the psalm may refer to times after the Babylonish captivity, and so may design Jewish synagogues, and even take in places of worship among Christians.

Ver. 9. *We see not our signs*, etc.] Either such miracles as were formerly wrought to support the faith of God's people in distress, and for their deliverance out of it, as when they were in Egypt, and brought forth from thence; (see ^{<198B>}Psalm 78:43 105:27) or rather their sabbaths and sacrifices, the passover and circumcision, and other ordinances and institutions of divine worship; which were signs of the presence of God with them, and of Christ, and blessings of grace, and good things to come by him; which ceased, or were interrupted in their captivity, and which the godly lament: or the signs of redemption, as Kimchi; and may be interpreted of the blindness and stupidity of the greater part of them, who could not discern the signs of the times, as before the destruction of the city and temple, (^{<166B>}Matthew 16:3) so after it, when these being destroyed, and they in the hands of the Romans, might easily have perceived that the sceptre was departed from Judah, and therefore Shiloh must be come, or the Messiah; who also must have been in his temple, and Daniel's weeks be up; but these signs they saw not, nor do they yet: and so though the signs of the latter day are upon us, we see them not, or at least very few take notice of them, and lament them; such as a very great departure from the faith of the Gospel, a neglect of Gospel worship and ordinances, coldness and lukewarmness in matters of religion, want of love to Christ and his people, a general sleepiness and security, a form of religion without the power of it, a name to live and be dead, and iniquity abounding even among professors of religion; besides the frequent signs in heaven and in earth; (see ^{<144D>}Matthew 24:12,23,29 ^{<121D>}Luke 21:9-11 25-28 ^{<510E>}2 Timothy 3:1-5),

there is no more any prophet; there were but few in the Babylonish captivity, and after Malachi there were none; there were none in the times of Antiochus; there were none till John the forerunner of Christ came; and in the latter day the two prophets that prophesy in sackcloth will be slain, and there will be no prophesying for a while, (^{<610E>}Revelation 11:7-9). Kimchi explains it, there is no prophet yet, and interprets it thus, Elijah the prophet is not yet come:

neither is there among us any that knoweth how long; the calamity will endure, and ere deliverance will come; how long the Babylonish captivity would continue was known, that it would be seventy years, and no longer; the prophets that searched after the time of salvation and redemption by Christ knew how long it would be to it; Daniel fixed the exact time of it; but how long the present times will last we know not, or how long it is to

the end of wonders; or when will end the 1260 days of the reign of antichrist, of the church's being in the wilderness, of the holy city being trodden under foot by the Gentiles, and of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth.

Ver. 10. *O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?* etc.] The name of God, as in the next clause, the divine Persons and perfections, the purposes and providence of God, his people, ways, worship, truths, and ordinances:

shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? The “adversary” and “enemy” being in the singular number, may intend some particular one, as antichrist; who is emphatically and eminently “the enemy” of God, he opposing himself to, and exalting himself above, all that is called God; and the adversary of Christ, as his name shows; not only setting himself in his room and stead, but undermining him in all his offices; changing his laws as a King, dishonouring his sacrifice and intercession as a priest, and doing injury to his word and ordinances as a Prophet; and who has a mouth speaking blasphemies against God, his name, and tabernacle, heaven, and they that dwell therein, angels and saints, (^{<4635>}Revelation 13:5). He reproaches and blasphemes God himself, by showing himself to be God, by suffering himself to be so called, and to be worshipped as if he was God; by taking infallibility to himself, and setting up image worship, and obliging persons to it: he reproaches and blasphemes the Son of God, in whom the name of God is, by pretending to be his vicar on earth, and head of the church; to transubstantiate the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; and to offer him up again in the blasphemous service of the mass: he reproaches and blasphemes his Gospel, which is his name, (^{<4095>}Acts 9:15), by introducing doctrines contrary to it, as the doctrines of merit, of works of supererogation, and justification by works; and the Scriptures, which bear the name and authority of God, by making them a nose of wax, taking upon himself to be the infallible interpreter of Scripture, and sole judge of controversies; by setting up his own unwritten traditions upon an equality with them, and forbidding the use of them to the people in their mother tongue: and he reproaches and blasphemes his name and authority by assuming it to himself in civil things, deposing and setting up kings at his pleasure; in religious affairs, dispensing with the laws of God, and teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; yea, in matters of salvation, giving out pardons and indulgences, pretending to open and shut heaven at pleasure. Moreover, these terms may be understood of many

enemies and adversaries, even of all the enemies of the grace of God, and person of Christ; such reproach and blaspheme the name of God the Father; by denying some of his perfections, as his sovereignty, omniscience, and punitive justice, and by charging his decrees with injustice, insincerity, and cruelty; they reproach and blaspheme the name of Christ, by denying his deity, eternal sonship, and distinct personality, and by speaking contemptuously of his righteousness, blood, and sacrifice; and they do despite unto the Spirit of grace, and speak evil of his person, and the operations of his grace on the souls of men; and such a day of rebuke and blasphemy is the present one: and these things give good men that observe them a great concern for the name of God, who are ready to fear there will be no end to these reproaches and blasphemies; but there will, the time is coming when the name of the Lord will be excellent in all the earth, and the Lord alone shall be exalted; but it is not known how long it will be to it.

Ver. 11. *Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even that right hand?* etc.] By which is meant the power of God; by which he made the heavens and the earth, and all things therein, and supports them in their beings; by which the work of his grace is wrought in the hearts of his people, and they are upheld; and by which he conquers their enemies, and saves them: this may be said to be withdrawn when he denies his people the help and succour they have had from him; when he seems to have forsaken the work of his hands; when there is not that success in the ministry of the word there formerly was, his arm being not revealed and made bare; and when the enemies of religion prosper and get ground; and when the Lord seems to be altogether inactive and unconcerned, like a man that folds up his arms under his arm holes, or hides his hands in his bosom, (see ^{194B} Psalm 44:23-26 ^{192B} Proverbs 19:24 ^{211B} Lamentations 2:3-8) wherefore it follows:

pluck it out of thy bosom; as he will one day, and strike with a home blow, antichrist and his followers, and destroy them with his rod of iron, with which he will break them in shivers as a potter's vessel; and all his enemies shall feel the lighting down of his arm with the indignation of his anger; and then this request will be fulfilled: the word used signifies to "consume"^{f1054}; and Kimchi interprets it, consume the enemy out of thy bosom, which is the house of the sanctuary; his secret place, as the bosom is to man; but both senses of the word maybe retained, and the meaning be, pluck it out of thy bosom to consume them^{f1055}: also it signifies to restrain^{f1056}; and the sense may be, as the above writer observes, restrain it, that it may not return to thy bosom, till thou hast executed judgment on the wicked.

Ver. 12. *For God is my King of old*, etc.] Or “but God”, or “verily God”, etc. ^{f1057}; for these words contain the church’s consolation under all the above melancholy circumstances, taken from what God was, and had been to her, even Christ, who is God over all; he was her King by the constitution and designation of his Father, and so he had been of old, even from everlasting; for so early was he set up as King; and he had in all ages been exercising his kingly office for the good of his church, and continued to do so; and this was her comfort, and is the comfort of saints in the worst of times, that Zion’s King reigneth, (see ^{<940>}Psalm 46:1-3,5,7 97:1 ^{<251>}Isaiah 52:7)

working salvation in the midst of the earth; it is “salvations” ^{f1058} in the plural number, and means both spiritual and eternal salvation, which the Lord has wrought out; and is continually applying to his people; and temporal salvation, which the Lord has been and is daily working out; he continually protecting his people, and saving them from their enemies, and delivering them out of their afflictions and temptations; and which the church considers and improves into an argument to encourage her faith, and expect the time when her walls would be salvation, and her gates praise; and she should have reason to say, now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ; and give him all the glory of it; (see ^{<208>}Isaiah 60:18 ^{<620>}Revelation 12:10 19:1), which salvation, as it has been, so will be wrought

in the midst of the earth; meaning not in the midst of the land of Judea, or in Judea, the middle of the world, but openly and publicly in all the earth; though Cyril of Jerusalem says ^{f1059} Golgotha is the midst of the earth, where Christ suffered and wrought out salvation; and that it is here referred to.

Ver. 13. *Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength*, etc.] This and the following instances from hence to (^{<9748>}Psalm 74:18) are proofs of God’s working salvation in the midst of the earth; some of them seem peculiar to the people of Israel, and others are benefits common to mankind in general; which the church makes use of to encourage her faith and hope, in expectation of salvation, and deliverance out of her present distressed and melancholy circumstances. This seems to refer to the Lord’s dividing of the Red sea into parts by a strong east wind, while Moses lifted up his rod and stretched out his hand as he was ordered, as a token of the divine power, and so the children of Israel passed through it as on dry land, (^{<121>}Exodus

14:21), and he that did this can make way for his redeemed ones to return to Zion with everlasting joy, (^{<2510>}Isaiah 51:10). Some render the words, “thou hast broken the sea by thy strength” ^{f1060}; subdued and conquered it, and so hast the dominion over it, rulest the raging of it, settest bounds to it, and hast ordered its proud waves to go so far and no farther; and thus the Arabic version, “thou hast made it to stand”; and the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions, “thou hast confirmed it”: but our version is best, which refers it to the work of God at the Red sea, and with which the Targum agrees; and Aben Ezra observes, that some refer it to the dividing of the Red sea:

thou breakest the heads of the dragons in the waters: or great whales, as the word is rendered in (^{<0021>}Genesis 1:21), by which are meant Pharaoh and his generals, his captains and chief men, who were destroyed in the waters of the Red sea; comparable to dragons for their strength, for their cruelty to the children of Israel, and for their wrath and malice against them; and so, for the same reason, another Pharaoh, king of Egypt, in later times, is called the great dragon, that lies in the midst of his rivers, (^{<3213>}Ezekiel 29:3 32:2) and the king of Babylon or of Egypt, (^{<3270>}Isaiah 27:1). So the Targum paraphrases it:

“thou hast broken the heads of dragons, and hast suffocated the Egyptians in the sea.”

Rome Pagan is compared to a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, which have been broken and destroyed, (^{<6113>}Revelation 12:3,7-9), and Rome Papal has the power, seat, and great authority of the dragon; and though the Romish antichrist has two horns like a lamb, he speaks as a dragon, who also has seven heads and ten horns, and which ere long will be broke in pieces, (see ^{<6113>}Revelation 13:1,2,11 19:15 2:27), in the faith of which the church might be strengthened, by considering what God had done to the heads of the dragon in the Red sea; to which may be added that Satan is called a dragon, (^{<3913>}Psalms 91:13 ^{<6113>}Revelation 12:9 20:2), whose head was bruised, and his principalities and powers spoiled, by Christ at his death, and will be utterly destroyed at his second coming.

Ver. 14. *Thou breakest the heads of leviathan in pieces*, etc.] A large fish, generally thought to be the whale, by some the crocodile, described in (^{<1840>}Job 41:1) to which the king of Egypt or Babylon is compared, (^{<3270>}Isaiah 27:1) and so the Romish antichrist in one of his characters is represented as a sea beast with many heads, which will all be broken in

pieces in due time, (⁶¹³¹⁰ Revelation 13:1), as here is one “leviathan” with heads in the plural number. Aben Ezra thinks the word **l k** is wanting, and may be supplied thus, “thou hast broken the heads of every leviathan”; it may be interpreted as before of Pharaoh and his chief men; so the Targum,

“thou hast broken the heads of the mighty men of Pharaoh:”

and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness; either to the wild beasts, called “tziim”, the word here used, (²³¹²¹ Isaiah 13:21) and may be called a people, as the ants and coneyes are, (³¹⁰²⁵ Proverbs 30:25,26), to whom the dead bodies of Pharaoh and his host, drowned in the Red sea, were given for food, when they were cast upon the shore, where the Israelites saw them dead, (⁴¹²²⁸ Exodus 14:28), or to the “Ichthyophagy”, a sort of people that dwelt by the Red sea, and lived on fishes; and so the Egyptians became their food, they living upon the fish which devoured their bodies, at least some of them: the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Ethiopic, and Arabic versions, render it, “to the people”, the Ethiopians; who, it seems, living upon the borders of Egypt, took this opportunity, when Pharaoh and his host were drowned, and seized upon their country; but others refer it to the people of Israel themselves, as the Targum,

“thou hast given them for destruction to the people of the house of Israel, and their bodies to the dragons;”

and so Jarchi,

“thou hast given his mammon or riches to the people of Israel, to feed their companies and armies;”

and Kimchi interprets it of the spoil of the sea which the Israelites took from them; and they may be truly called the people inhabiting the wilderness, since they were in one forty years; so the Romish “leviathan”, or antichristian whore, will be given to the Christian kings, who will hate her, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire; and to the Christian church, which now is in the wilderness, where it is nourished for a time and times, and half a time.

Ver. 15. *Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood*, etc.] That is, the rocks at Horeb and at Kadesh, from whence water flowed as out of a fountain, and became a flood, whereby the people of Israel were supplied with water in the wilderness, and also their beasts; and from this instance it

may be concluded that God will not leave his people, nor suffer them to want, but will supply all their need while they are in the wilderness, and will open fountains and rivers for them, (²⁴¹⁷Isaiah 41:17,18) he himself is a fountain of living water; Christ is the fountain of gardens, and the Spirit and his grace a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life:

thou driedst up mighty rivers; the river of Jordan, called “mighty”, as Kimchi says, because by its strength it overflowed all its banks and “rivers”, and because other rivers flowed into it; this was dried up, or way was made through it, as on dry land, for the people of Israel to pass into Canaan, (⁴⁰³⁴Joshua 3:14,15), the Targum is,

“thou hast dried up the fords and brooks of Hermon, and the fords of Jabbok and Jordan;”

(see ⁴⁰²⁴Numbers 21:14,24), and the Lord, that did this, is able to dry up, and will dry up, the river Euphrates, as is foretold, (⁶⁶²Revelation 16:12), that is, destroy the Turkish empire, and make way for the spread of the Gospel in the eastern parts of the world; to which reference is had in (²⁴¹⁵Isaiah 11:15,16).

Ver. 16. *The day is thine, and the night also is thine*, etc.] He made the one and the other, and divided the one from the other; and can make them longer or shorter, clear or cloudy, as he pleases: and the day of prosperity and night of adversity are at his disposal; all the times of his people and of his church are in his hands; sometimes it is a night of darkness, deadness, sleepiness, and security, as it now is; ere long there will be no more night, but bright day; the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven fold as the light of seven days; and this is to be expected from him whose is the day and the night also, (⁶²⁵Revelation 21:25 ²⁴¹¹Isaiah 40:1 30:26). Jarchi interprets the day, of the redemption of Israel; and the night, of distresses and afflictions:

thou hast prepared the light and the sun; first the light, and then the sun; for the light was before the sun; or the luminary, even the sun. Aben Ezra interprets the “light” of the moon, and so the Targum; and Kimchi, both of the moon and of the stars; Jarchi takes the light figuratively to be meant of the light of the law; but it is much better to understand it of the light of the Gospel, which God has prepared, and will send forth more largely in the latter day, whereby the whole earth shall be lightened; and when Christ the

“sun” of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings, and who gives both the light of grace and glory to his people.

Ver. 17. *Thou hast set all the borders of the earth*, etc.] Of the whole world, and each of the nations, as of the land of Canaan, so of others, (^{<4638>}Deuteronomy 32:8), and even has fixed and settled the bounds of every man’s habitation, (^{<4473>}Acts 17:26),

thou hast made summer and winter; (see ^{<0082>}Genesis 8:22), which, taken literally, are great benefits to the world; and, figuratively understood, may represent the two dispensations of the law and Gospel; (see ^{<2211>}Song of Solomon 2:11,12), and the different frames of God’s people when under temptations, and clouds, and darkness, and when they enjoy peace and comfort; and the different state of the church, when affected with affliction, persecution, false doctrine, deadness, and formality, which is now greatly the case; but there is a summer coming, when it will be otherwise; (see ^{<4231>}Luke 21:30,31).

Ver. 18. *Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord*, etc.] Or “hath reproached the Lord”, as the Septuagint version and others render it, and very rightly; though not so well the former part of the clause, which it renders, or rather paraphrases, thus: “remember this thy creation”, or “creature”; as if it referred to what goes before, as day and night, light and sun, the borders of the earth, summer and winter; whereas it is to be connected with what follows, the reproach of the Lord by the enemy; and it is a prayer of the church, that God would remember the enemy and his reproaches, which seemed to be forgotten, and inflict deserved punishments on him, which will be done in due time, (^{<6639>}Revelation 16:19 18:5,6), and that

the foolish people have blasphemed thy name; the “foolish people” are not such as want common sense, or are idiots; the blasphemers of God and Christ, and the blessed Spirit, are generally the wise and prudent of this world, from whom the things of the Gospel are hidden; but wicked and profane men: scoffers at religion, and blasphemers of Christ, his truths and ordinances, are commonly such who walk after their own ungodly lusts, who, though wise to do evil, are foolish in matters of religion: perhaps the Gentiles, which know not God, are here meant, and are so called, (^{<4632>}Deuteronomy 32:21), and it is observable, that the Papists bear the name of Gentiles in (^{<6610>}Revelation 11:2,18), and may be the foolish people here chiefly designed, who worship images of gold, silver, brass, and

wood, and are notorious for their blasphemies; (see Gill on “^{1974D}Psalm 74:10”).

Ver. 19. *O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove*, etc.] By which is meant the church, (see ²⁰⁰⁴Song of Solomon 2:14 5:2 6:9), which is comparable to this creature for its cleanness and purity, for its amiableness and beauty, for its harmlessness and innocence, for its modesty and meekness, for its affection and chastity to its mate, for its mournful and bemoaning voice for the loss of it, for its being a timorous and fearful creature, a weak one, and exposed to the prey of others; all which is true of the church, and may be applied to it: the Targum is,

“do not deliver the souls of them that teach thy law;”

the word having some affinity with “torah”, the law; but Jarchi says, that Jonathan, in his Targum (which is not now extant) interprets it a turtle; the Syriac version, by the change of a letter, renders it, “the soul that confesseth thee”: and the Arabic version, by a like change, and the addition of a letter, “the soul that knows thee”; all which, indeed, is applicable to the church of God; but our version expresses the true sense of the word, with which agree Jarchi, Kimchi, Ben Melech, and others: and it is a prayer of the church for herself; that the life of her members, their corporeal life (for not the soul, the better part, and its eternal concerns, are meant, which are safe in Christ’s hands), might not be delivered

unto the multitude of the wicked, or “to the beast” ^{f1061}; to persecutors comparable to lions and bears, and particularly the Romish antichrist, often called the beast in (^{661B}Revelation 11:8 13:1,11 17:3), do not deliver

“to the people, who are like to the beasts of the field, the souls of, etc.:”

forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever; the church of God is a congregation of men gathered out of the world by effectual grace, and consists chiefly of such who are literally poor, and all of them are spiritually so, and are sensible of it; for the most part they are a poor and “afflicted” ^{f1062} people, as the word may be also rendered, which the church is made up of; and may seem by themselves and others to be forgotten of God, when under divine desertions, or under afflictions, and immediate help is not given; but they are not forgotten, and still less for ever; (see ³⁹⁴Isaiah 49:14-16).

Ver. 20. *Have respect unto the covenant*, etc.] The Targum adds,

“which thou hast made with our fathers;”

meaning not the covenant of works, which being broken, no good thing was to be expected from it, not liberty, life, nor eternal salvation, but all the reverse; but the covenant of grace, made with Christ before the world was, and made manifest to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to David, and others: this God has a respect unto, and does look unto it; he looks to the surety and Mediator of it, which is Christ, for the fulfilment of all conditions in it; to the promises of it, that they may be made good; to the blessings of it, that they be bestowed upon the persons to whom they belong; to the blood of it, for the delivering of the church’s prisoners, and the salvation of them from wrath to come; and to the persons interested in it, that they be all called and brought safe to glory; and particularly to the things in it, respecting the glory of the church in the latter day, and increase of its members, and of its light, which seem chiefly designed here; and therefore it follows:

for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty; many places of the earth are in gross darkness as to the knowledge of spiritual and divine things; even all those places which are inhabited by Pagans, Mahometans, and Papists, which make a great part of the globe; and in these dark places cruelty reigns, and especially in the antichristian states; wherefore the church pleads the covenant of God and his promises, that he would send forth his light and his truth, and cover the earth with the knowledge of the Lord, which is now covered with gross darkness, and under the tyranny and oppression of the man of sin.

Ver. 21. *O let not the oppressed return ashamed*, etc.] From the throne of grace, not having an answer of their prayer, but still continuing under the oppressions of their enemies:

let the poor and needy praise thy name; let them have occasion for it, by the destruction of their enemies, and their deliverance from them, as they will have ere long; (see ~~600~~ Revelation 19:1,2).

Ver. 22. *Arise, O God, plead thine own cause*, etc.] The church’s cause being the cause of God; and therefore she desires that he would arise and exert himself, and take vengeance on his and her enemies: this is an interesting argument, and a forcible one:

remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily; this being so frequently repeated, as in (<3740>Psalm 74:10,18), shows how much the name and glory of God lay near her heart; the Targum is,

“remember the reproach of thy people by a foolish king all the day;”

perhaps the man of sin is meant, the king of the locusts, and angel of the bottomless pit.

Ver. 23. *Forget not the voice of thine enemies*, etc.] Their roaring in the midst of the sanctuary and the congregation, (<3740>Psalm 74:4), their reproaching and blaspheming voice, (<3740>Psalm 74:10,18,22),

the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually, or “ascendeth”^{f1063}; goes up to God, and is taken notice of by him; the cry of their sins, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of the city of Nineveh, (<0180>Genesis 18:20,21 Jon 1:2), was continually going up to God; wherefore it might be hoped and expected that vengeance in a little time would come down; (see <6685>Revelation 18:5-7), the Septuagint, and the versions that follow that, render it, “the pride of those”, etc. all these petitions are prayers of faith, and are, or will be, heard and answered; upon which will follow thanksgivings, with which the next psalm begins.