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OLD TESTAMENT
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The Book of the Prophet Hosea

I. We have now before us the twelve minor prophets, which some of the ancients, in reckoning up the books of the Old Testament, put all together, and reckon but as *one book*. They are called the minor prophets, not because their writings are of any less authority or usefulness than those of the greater prophets, or as if these prophets were less in God's account or might be so in ours than the other, but only because they are shorter, and less in bulk, than the other. We have reason to think that these prophets preached as much as the others, but that they did not write so much, nor is so much of their preaching kept upon record. Many excellent prophets wrote nothing and others but little, who yet were very useful in their day. And so in the Christian church there have been many burning and shining lights, who are not known to posterity by their writings, and yet were no way inferior in gifts, and graces, and serviceableness to their own generation, than those who are; and some who have left but little behind them, and make no great figure among authors, were yet as valuable men as the more voluminous writers. These twelve small prophets, Josephus says, were put into one volume by the *men of the great synagogue* in Ezra's time, of which learned and pious body of men the last three of these twelve prophets are supposed to have been themselves members. These are what remained of the scattered pieces of inspired writing. Antiquaries value the *fragmenta veterum* – *the fragments of antiquity*; these are the fragments of prophecy, which are carefully gathered up by the divine Providence and the care of the church, that nothing might be lost, as St. Paul's short epistles after his long ones. The son of Sirach speaks of these twelve prophets with honor, as men that *strengthened Jacob*, *Ecclus.* 49:10. nine of these prophets prophesied before the captivity, and the last three after the return of the Jews to their own land. Some difference there is in the order of these books. We place them as the ancient Hebrew did; and all agree to put Hosea first; but the ancient thing is not material. Moreover, if we covet to place them according to their seniority, as to some of them we shall find no certainty.

II. We have before us the prophecy of Hosea, who was the first of all the writing prophets, being raised up somewhat before the time of Isaiah. The ancients say, He was of Bethshemesh, and of the tribe of Issachar. He continued very long a prophet; the Jews reckoned that he prophesied nearly fourscore and ten years; so that, as Jerome observes, he prophesied of the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes when it was at a great distance, and lived himself to see and lament it, and to improve it when it was over, for warning to its sister kingdom. The scope of his prophecy is to discover sin, and to denounce the judgments of God against a people that would not be reformed. The style is very concise and sententious, above any of the prophets; and in some places, it seems to be like the book of Proverbs, without connection, and rather to be called Hosea's *sayings* than Hosea's *sermons*. One the commentaries observes that many passages in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel seem to refer to, and to be borrowed from, the prophet Hosea, who wrote a good while before them. As Jer. 7:34 ; 16:9 ; 25:10 ; and Eze. 26:13 , speak the same with Hos. 2:11 ; so Eze. 16:16 , etc., is taken from Hos. 2:8 . In addition, that promises of *servoing the Lord their God*, and *David their king*, Jer. 30:8 , 9. Eze. 34:23 , *Hosea* had before, 3:5 . Moreover, Eze. 19:12 is taken from Hos. 13:15 . Thus, one prophet confirms and supports another; and all these work that one and the self-same Spirit.

CHAPTER 1

The mind of God is revealed to this prophet, and by him to the people, in the first three chapters, by signs and types, but afterwards only by dialogue. In this chapter we have, I. The general title of the whole book (v. 1). II. Some particular instructions, which he was ordered to give to the people of God. 1. He must convince them of their sin in going a whoring from God, by marrying a wife of whoredoms (v. 2, 3). 2. He must foretells the ruin coming upon them for their sin, in the names of his sons, which signified God's disowning and abandoning them (v. 4-6, 8, 9). 3. He must speak comfortable to the kingdom of Judah, which still retained the pure worship of God, and assure them of the salvation of the Lord (v. 7). 4. He must give an intimation of the great mercy God had in store both for Israel and Judah, in the latter days (v. 10, 11), for in this prophecy many precious promises of mercy are mixed with the threatening of wrath.

CHAPTER 2

The scope of this chapter seems to be much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, and to point at the same events, and the causes of them. As there, so here, I. God, by the prophet, discovers sin to them, and charges it home upon them, the sin of their idolatry, their spiritual whoredom, their serving idols and forgetting God and their obligations to him (v. 1, 2, 5, 8). II. He threatens to take away from them that plenty of all good things with which they had served their idols, and to abandon them to ruin without remedy (v. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9-13). III. Yet he promises at last to return in ways of mercy to them for his own sake (v. 14), to restore them to their former plenty (v. 15), to cure them of their inclination to idolatry (v. 16, 17), to renew his covenant with them (v. 18-20), and to bless them with all good things (v. 21-23).

CHAPTER 3

God is still by the prophet inculcating the same thing upon this careless people, and much in the same manner as before, by a type or sign, that of the dealings of a husband with an adulterous wife. In this chapter we have, I. The bad character which the people of Israel now had; they were, as is said of the Athenians (Acts 17:16), "wholly given to idolatry," (v. 1). II. The low condition which they should be reduced to by their captivity, and the other instances of God's controversy with them (v. 2-4). III. The blessed reformation that should at length be wrought upon them in the latter days (v. 5).

CHAPTER 4

Prophets were sent to rebuke, to tell people of their faults, and to warn them of the judgments of God, to which by sin they exposed themselves; so the prophet is employed in this and the following chapters. He is here, as counsel for the King of kings, opening a condemnation against the people of Israel, and laboring to convince them of sin, and of their misery and danger because of sin, that he might prevail with them to repent and reform. I. He shows them what were the grounds of God's controversy with them, a general prevalence of blasphemous (v. 1, 2), ignorance and forgetfulness of God (v. 6, 7), the worldly-mindedness of the priests (v. 8),

drunkenness and uncleanness (v. 11), using divination and witchcraft (v. 12), offering sacrifice in the high places (v. 13), whoredoms (v. 14, 18), and bribery among judges (v. 18). II. He shows them what would be the consequences of God's controversy. God would punish them for these things (v. 9). The whole land should be laid waste (v. 3), all sorts of people cut off (v. 5), their honor will be lost (v. 7), their creature-comforts unsatisfying (v. 10), and themselves made ashamed (v. 19). And, which is several times mentioned here as the sorest judgment of all, they should be let alone in their sins (v. 17), they shall not reprove one another (v. 4), God will not punish them (v. 14), nay, he will let them prosper (v. 16). III. He gives warning to Judah not to tread in the steps of Israel, because they saw their steps went down to hell (v. 15).

CHAPTER 5

The scope of this chapter is the same with that of the foregoing chapter, to discover the sin both of Israel and Judah, and to denounce the judgments of God against them. I. They are called to hearken to the charge (v. 1, 8). II. They are accused of many sins, which are here provoked: 1. Persecution (v. 1, 2). 2. Spiritual whoredom (v. 3, 4). 3. Pride (v. 5). 4. Running away from God (v. 7). 5. The cruelty of the princes, and the tameness of the people in submitting to it (v. 10, 11). III. They are threatened with God's displeasure for their sins; he knows all their wickedness (v. 3) and makes known his wrath against them for it (v. 9): 1. They shall fall in their iniquity (v. 5). 2. God will forsake them (v. 6). 3. Their portions shall be devoured (v. 7). 4. God will rebuke them, and pour out his wrath upon them (v. 9, 10). 5. They shall be oppressed (v. 11). 6. God will be as a moth to them in secret judgments (v. 12) and as a lion in public judgments (v. 14). IV. They are blamed for the wrong course they took under their afflictions (v. 13). V. It is intimated that they shall at length take a right course (v. 15). The more generally these things are expressed of so much the more general use they are for our learning, and particularly for our rebuke.

CHAPTER 6

The closing words of the foregoing chapter gave us some hopes that God and his Israel, despite their sins and his wrath, might yet be happily brought together again, that they would seek him and he would be found of them; now this chapter carries that matter further, and some join the beginning of this chapter with the end of that, "They will seek me early," saying, "Come and let us return." But God again complain of the wickedness of this people; for, though some did repent and reform, the greater part continued stubborn. Examine the following:

I. Their resolution to return to God, and the comforts wherewith they encourage themselves in their return (v. 1-3). II. The instability of many of them in their professions and promises of repentance, and the severe course which God therefore took with them (v. 4, 5). III. The covenant God made with them, and his expectations from them (v. 6); their violation of that covenant and frustrating those expectations (v. 7-11).

CHAPTER 7

In this chapter we have, I. A general charge drawn up against Israel for those high crimes and wrongdoing by which they had obstructed the course of God's favors to them (v. 1, 2). II. A particular accusation, 1. Of the court—the king, princes, and judges (v. 3-7). 2. Of the country. Ephraim is here charged with conforming to the nations (v. 8), senselessness and stupidity under the judgments of God (v. 9-11), ungratefulness to God for his mercies (v. 13), contempt of God (v. 15), and hypocrisy in their pretences to return to him (v. 16). They are also threatened with a severe chastisement, which shall humble them (v. 12), and, if that prevail not, then with an utter destruction (v. 13), particularly their princes (v. 16).

CHAPTER 8

This chapter, as that before, divides itself into the sins and punishments of Israel; every verse almost declares both, and all to bring them to repentance. When they saw the evil nature of their sin, in the descriptions of that, they could not but be convinced how much it was their duty to repent of what was so bad in itself; and when they saw the consequences of their sin, in the predictions of them, they could not but see how much it was their interest to repent for the preventing of them. I. The sin of Israel is here set forth, 1. In many general expressions (v. 1, 3, 12, 14). 2. In many particular instances; setting up kings without God (v. 4), setting up idols against God (v. 4-6, 11), and courting alliances with the neighboring nations, (v. 8-10). 3. In this aggravation of it, that they still kept up a profession of religion and relation to God (v. 2, 13, 14). II. The punishment of Israel is here set forth as answering to the sin. God would bring an enemy upon them (v. 1, 3). All their projects should be blasted (v. 7). Their confidence both in their idols and in their foreign alliances should disappoint them (v. 6, 8, 10). Their strength at home should fail them (v. 14).

CHAPTER 9

In this chapter, I. God threatens to deprive this degenerate seed of Israel of all their worldly enjoyments, because by sin they had forfeited their title to them; so that they should have no comfort either in receiving them themselves or in offering them to God (v. 1-5). II. He blow them to utter ruin, for their own sins and the sins of their prophets (v. 6-8). III. He reproach them with the wickedness of their fathers before them, whose steps they followed (v. 9, 10). IV. He threatens them with the destruction of their children and the rooting out of their subsequent (v. 11-17).

CHAPTER 10

In this chapter, I. The people of Israel are charged with gross corruptions in the worship of God and are threatened with the destruction of their images and altars (v. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8). II. They are charged with corruptions in the administration of the civil government and are threatened with the ruin of that (v. 3, 4, 7). III. They are charged with imitating the sins of their fathers, and with security in their own sins, and are threatened with smarting humbling judgments (v. 9-11). IV. They are earnestly invited to repent and reform, and are threatened with ruin if they did not (v. 12-15).

Chapter 11

In this chapter we have, I. The great goodness of God towards his people Israel, and the great things he had done for them (v. 1, 3, and 4). II. Their ungrateful conduct towards him, notwithstanding his favors towards them (v. 2-4, 7, 12). III. Threatening of wrath against them for their ingratitude and treachery (v. 5, 6). IV. Mercy remembered in the midst of wrath (v. 8, 9). V. Promises of what God would yet do for them (v. 10, 11). VI. An honorable character given of Judah (v. 12).

CHAPTER 12

In this chapter we have, I. A high charge drawn up against both Israel and Judah for their sins, which were the ground of God's controversy with them (v. 1, 2). Particularly the sin of fraud and injustice, which Ephraim is charged with (v. 7), and justifies himself in (v. 8). And the sin of idolatry (v. 11), by which God is provoked to contend with them (v. 14). II. The aggravations of the sins they are charged with, taken from the honor God put upon their father Jacob (v. 3-5), the advancement of them into a people from low and mean beginnings (v. 12, 13), and the provision he had made them of helps for their souls by the prophets he sent them (v. 10). III. A call to the unconverted to turn to God (v. 6). IV. An intimation of mercy that God had in store for them (v. 9).

CHAPTER 13

The same strings, though generally unpleasing ones, are harped upon in this chapter that were in those before. People care not to be told either of their sin or of their danger by sin; and yet it is necessary, and for their good, that they should be told of both, nor can they better hear of either than from the word of God and from their faithful ministers, while the sin may be repented of and the danger prevented. Here, I. The people of Israel are reprov'd and threaten'd for their idolatry (v. 1-4). II. They are reprov'd and threaten'd for their wantonness, pride, and luxury, and other abuses of their wealth and prosperity (v. 5-8). III. The ruin that is coming upon them for these and all their other sins is foretold as very terrible (v. 12, 13, 15, 16). IV. Those among them that yet retain a respect for their God are here encouraged to hope that he will yet appear for their relief, though their kings and princes, and all their other supports, fail them (v. 9-11, 14).

Chapter 14

The strain of this chapter differs from that of the foregoing chapters. Those were generally made up of reproofs for sin and threatening of wrath; but this is made up as an urge to repentance and promises of mercy, and with these the prophet closes; for all the foregoing convictions and terrors he had spoken were designed to prepare and make way for these. He wounds that he may heal. The Spirit convinces that he may comfort. This chapter is a lesson for penitents; and some such there were in Israel at this day, bad as things were. We have here, I. Directions in repenting, what to do and what to say (v. 1-3). II. Encouragements to repent taken from God's readiness to receive returning sinners (v. 4, 8) and the comforts he has treasured up for them (

v. 5-7). III. A solemn recommendation of these things to our serious thoughts (v. 9).

The Book of the Prophet Joel

It is uncertain about neither the time when this prophet prophesied; it is probable that it was about the same time Amos prophesied, nor a well defined reason that the prophet provide, "Because Amos begins his prophecy with that wherewith Joel concludes his, *The Lord shall roar out of Zion,*" but "Because he speaks of the same judgments of locusts, and drought, and fire, that Amos laments, which is an intimation that they appeared about the same time, Amos in Israel and Joel in Judah. Hosea and Obadiah prophesied about the same time; and it appears that Amos prophesied in the days of Jeroboam, the second king of Israel, Amos 7:10. God sent a variety of prophets, that they might strengthen the hands one of another, and that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might be established. In this prophecy, I. The desolations made by hosts of harmful insects is described, ch. 1 and part of ch. 2. II. The people are hereupon called to repentance, ch. 2. III. Promises are made of the return of mercy upon their repentance (ch. 2), and promises of the pouring out of the Spirit in the latter days. IV. The cause of God's people is pleaded against their enemies, whom God would in due time consider (ch. 3); and glorious things are spoken of the gospel—Jerusalem and of the prosperity and perpetuity of it.

CHAPTER 1

This chapter is the description of a lamentable devastation made of the country of Judah by locusts and caterpillars. Some think that the prophet speaks of it as a thing to come and gives warning of it beforehand, as usually the prophets did of judgments coming. Others think that it was now present, and that his business was to affect the people with it and awaken them by it to repentance. I. It is spoken of as a judgment which there was no precedent of in former ages (v. 1-7). II. All sorts of people sharing in the calamity are called upon to lament it (v. 8-13). III. They are directed to look up to God in their lamentations, and to humble themselves before him (v. 14-20).

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter we have, I. A further description of that terrible desolation which should be made in the land of Judah by the locusts and caterpillars (v. 1-11). II. A serious call to the people, when they are under this sore judgment, to return and repent, to fast and pray, and to seek unto God for mercy, with directions how to do this appropriate (v. 12-17). III. A promise that, upon their repentance, God would remove the judgment, would repair the breakage made upon them by it, and restore unto them plenty of all good things (v. 18-27). IV. A prediction of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world, by the pouring out of the Spirit in the latter days (v. 28-32). Thus the beginning of this chapter is made terrible with the tokens of God's wrath, but the latter end of it made comfortable with the assurances of his favor, and it is in the way of repentance that this blessed change is made; so that, though it is only the last paragraph of the chapter that points directly at gospel-times, yet the whole may be improved as a type and figure, representing the curses of the law invading men for their sins, and the comforts of the gospel flowing in to them upon their repentance.

CHAPTER 3

In the close of the foregoing chapter we had a gracious promise of deliverance in Mount Zion and Jerusalem; now this whole chapter is a comment upon that promise, showing what that deliverance shall be, how it shall be wrought by the destruction of the church's enemies, and how it shall be perfected in the everlasting rest and joy of the church. This was in part accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from the attempt that Sennacherib made upon it in Hezekiah's time, and afterwards in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, and other deliverances wrought for the Jewish church between that and Christ's coming. But it has a further reference, to the great redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, and the destruction of our spiritual enemies and all their agents, and will have its full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day. Here is a prediction, I. Of God's judging the enemies of his people for all the injuries and indignities that they had done to them, and returning them upon their own head (v. 1-8). II. Of God's judging all nations when the measure of their iniquity is full, and appearing publicly, to the everlasting confusion of all impenitent sinners and the everlasting comfort of all his faithful servants (v. 9-17). III. Of the provision God has made for the refreshment of his people, for their safety and purity, when their enemies shall be made desolate (v. 18-21). These promises were not of private interpretation only, but were written for our learning, "that we, through patience and comfort of this scripture, might have hope."

The Prophecy of Amos

Though this prophet appeared a little before Isaiah, yet he was not, as some have mistaken, that Amos who was the father of Isaiah (Isa. 1:1), for in the Hebrew their names are very different; their families too were of a different character, for Isaiah was a member of the aristocracy, Amos a country-farmer. Amos signifies a *burden*, whence the Jews have a tradition that he was of a slow tongue and spoke with stammering lips; we may rather, in allusion to his name, say that his speech was *weighty* and his word the *burden of the Lord*. He was (as most think) of Judah, yet prophesied chiefly against Israel, and at Bethel, 7:13. Some think his style is affected by his extraction, and is more plain and rustic than that of some other of the prophets; does not seem so; but it is plain that his matter agreed with that of his contemporary Hosea, that *out of the mouth of these two witnesses the word might be established*. It appears by his contest with Amaziah the priest of Bethel that he met with opposition in his work, but was a man of fearless resolution in it, faithful and bold in reproving sin and denouncing the judgments of God for it, and pressing tirelessly to repentance and reformation. He begins with threatenings against the neighboring nations that were enemies to Israel, ch. 1 and 2. He then calls Israel to account, and judges them for their idolatry, their unworthy walking under the favors God had bestowed upon them, and their incorrigibleness under his judgments, ch. 3 and 4. He calls them to repentance (ch. 5), rejecting their hypocritical sacrifices unless they did repent. He foretells the desolations that were coming upon them notwithstanding their security (ch. 6), some particular judgments (ch. 7), particularly on Amaziah; and, after other reproofs and threatenings (ch. 8 and 9), concludes with a promise of the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom and the happiness of God's spiritual Israel therein, just as the prophecy of Joel concluded. These prophets, having opened the wound in their reproofs and threatenings, which show all wrong, in the promises of gospel-grace open the remedy, which alone will set all to rights.

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter we have, I. The general title of this prophecy (v. 1), with the general scope of it (v. 2). II. God's particular controversy with Syria (v. 3-5), with Palestine (v. 6-8), with Tyre (v. 9, 10), with Edom (v. 11, 12), and with Ammon (v. 13-15), for their cruelty to his people and the many injuries they had done them. This explains God's pleading with the nations, Joel 3:2.

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter, I. God, by the prophet, proceeds in a like controversy with Moab as before with other nations (v. 1-3). II. He shows what quarrel he had with Judah (v. 4, 5). III. He at length begins his charge against Israel, to which all that goes before is but an introduction. Observe, 1. The sins they are charged with—injustice, oppression, whoredom (v. 6-8). 2. The aggravations of those sins—the temporal and spiritual mercies God had bestowed upon them, for which they had made him such ungrateful returns (v. 9-12). 3. God's complaint of them for their sins (v. 13) and his threatenings of their ruin, and their utter inability to prevent it (v. 14-16).

CHAPTER 3

A stupid, senseless, heedless people, are, in this chapter, called upon to take notice, I. Of the judgments of God denounced against them and the warnings he gave them of those judgments, and to be hereby awakened out of their security (v. 1-8). II. Of the sins that were found among them, by which God was provoked thus to threaten, thus to punish, that they might justify God in his controversy with them, and, unless they repented and reformed, might expect no other than that God should proceed in his controversy (v. 9-15).

CHAPTER 4

In this chapter, I. The oppressors in Israel are threatened for their oppression of the poor (v. 1-3). II. The idolaters in Israel, being joined to idols, are given up to their own heart's lusts (v. 4, 5). III. All the sins of Israel are aggravated their refusal to return and reform, notwithstanding the various rebukes of Providence which they had been under (v. 6-11). IV. They are invited yet at length to humble themselves before God, since it is impossible for them to make their part good against him (v. 12, 13).

CHAPTER 5

The scope of this chapter is to prosecute the exhortation given to Israel in the close of the foregoing chapter to prepare to meet their God; the prophet here tells them, I. What preparation they must make; they must "seek the Lord," and not seek any more to idols (v. 4-8); they must seek good, and love it (v. 14, 15). II. Why they must make this preparation to meet their God, 1. Because of the present deplorable condition they were in (v. 1-3). 2. Because it was by sin that they were brought into such a condition (v. 7, 10-12). 3. Because it would be their happiness to seek God, and he was ready to be found of them (v. 8, 9, 14). 4. Because he would proceed, in his wrath, to their utter ruin, if they did not seek him (v. 5, 6, 13, 16, 17). 5. Because all their confidences would fail them if they did not seek unto God, and make him their friend. (1.) Their profane contempt of God's judgments, and setting them at defiance, would not secure them (v. 18-20). (2.) Their external services in religion, and the shows of devotion, would not avail to turn away the wrath of God (v. 21-24). (3.) Their having been long in possession of church-privileges, and in a course of holy duties, would not be their protection, while all along they had kept up their idolatrous customs (v. 25-27). They have therefore no way left them to save themselves, but by repentance and reformation.

CHAPTER 6

In this chapter we have, I. A sinful people studying to put a negligence upon God's threatenings and to make them appear trivial, confiding in their privileges and superiority above other nations (v. 2, 3), and their power (v. 13), and wholly addicted to their pleasures (v. 4-6). II. A serious prophet studying to put a weight upon God's threatenings and to make them appear terrible, by setting forth the severity of those judgments that were coming upon these sensualists (v. 7), God's abhorring them, and abandoning them and theirs to death (v. 8-11), and bringing utter desolation upon them, since they would not be wrought upon by the methods he

had taken for their conviction (v. 12-14).

CHAPTER 7

In this chapter we have, I. God contending with Israel, by the judgments, but are pardoned, and the judgments turned away at the prayer of Amos (v. 1-6). 2. God's patience is at length worn out by their obstinacy, and they are rejected, and sentenced to total the ruin (v. 7-9). II. Israel contending with God, by the opposition given to his prophet. 1. Amaziah informs against Amos (v. 10, 11) and does what he can to rid the country of him as a public nuisance (v. 12, 13). 2. Amos justifies himself in what he did as a prophet (v. 14, 15) and denounces the judgments of God against Amaziah his prosecutor (v. 16, 17); for, when the contest is between God and man, it is easy to foresee, it is very easy to foretell, who will come off with the worst of it.

CHAPTER 8

Sinful times are here attended with sorrowful times, so necessary is the connection between them; it is threatened here again and again that the laughter shall be turned into mourning. I. By the vision of "basket of summer-fruit" is signified the hastening on of the ruin threatened (v. 1-3) and that shall change their note. II. Oppressors are here called to an account for their abusing the poor; and their destruction is foretold, which will set them mourning (v. 4-10). III. A famine of the word of God is here made the punishment of a people that go a whoring after other gods (v. 11-14); yet for this, which is the most mournful judgment of all, they are not here brought in mourning.

CHAPTER 9

In this chapter we have, I. Judgment threatened, which the sinners shall not escape (v. 1-4), which an almighty power shall inflict (v. 5, 6), which the people of Israel have deserved as a sinful people (v. 7, 8); and yet it shall not be the total ruin of their nation (v. 8), for a remnant of good people shall escape (v. 9). But the wicked ones shall perish (v. 10). II. Mercy promised, which was to be bestowed in the latter days (v. 11-15), as appears by the application of it to the days of the Messiah, Acts 15:16. And with those comfortable promises, after all the foregoing rebukes and threatenings, the book concludes.

The Prophecy of Obadiah

This is the shortest of all the books of the Old Testament, the least of those tribes, and yet is not to be passed by, or thought meanly of, for this penny has Caesar's image and superscription upon it; it is stamped with a divine authority. There may appear much of God in a short sermon, in a little book; and much good may be done by it, *multum in parvo* – *much in a little*. One of the scholars says, "If angels were to write books, we should have few folios." That may be very precious which is not voluminous. This book is entitled, *The Vision of Obadiah*. Who this Obadiah was does not appear from any other scripture. Some of the ancients imagined him to be the same with that Obadiah that was steward to Ahab's household (1 Ki. 18:3); and, if so, he that hid and fed the prophets had indeed a prophet's reward, when he was himself made a prophet. But that is an assumption which has no ground. This Obadiah, it is probable, was of a later date, some think contemporary with Hosea, Joel, and Amos; others think he lived about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the children of Edom so barbarously triumphed in that destruction. However, what he wrote was what he saw; it is his *vision*. Probably there was much more which he was divinely inspired to speak, but this is all he was inspired to write; and all he writes is concerning Edom. It is a foolish fancy of some of the Jews that because he prophesies only concerning Edom he was himself an Edomite by birth, but he embraced the Jewish religion. Other prophets prophesied against Edom, and some of them seem to have borrowed from him in their predictions against Edom, as Jer. 49:7, etc.; Eze. 25:12, etc. Out of the mouth of these two or three witnesses every word will be established.

This book is wholly concerning Edom, a nation nearly allied and near adjoining to Israel, and yet an enemy to the seed of Jacob, inheriting the enmity of their father Esau to Jacob. Now here we have, after the preface (v. 1). I. Threatenings against Edom, 1. That their pride should be humbled (v. 2-4). 2. That their wealth should be plundered (v. 5-7). 3. That their wisdom should be taken (v. 8, 9). 4. That their spiteful behavior towards God's Israel should be avenged (v. 10-16). II. Gracious promises to Israel; that they shall be restored and reformed, and shall be victorious over the Edomites, and become masters of their land and the lands of others of their neighbors (v. 17-20), and that the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up by the bringing in of the great salvation (v. 21).

The Book of Jonah

This book of Jonah, though it be placed here in the midst of the prophetic books of scripture, is yet rather a history than a prophecy; one line of prediction there is in it, *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown*; the rest of the book is a narrative of the preface to and the consequences of that prediction. In the midst of the obscure prophecies before and after this book, wherein are many things dark and hard to be understood, which are puzzling to be learned, and are *strong meat for strong men*, comes in this plain and pleasant story, which is entertaining to the weakest, and *milk for babes*. Probably Jonah was himself the penman of this book, and he, as Moses and other inspired penmen, records his own faults, which is an evidence that in these writings they designed God's glory and not their own. We read of this same Jonah 2 Ki. 14:25, where we find that he was of Gath-hepher in Galilee, a city that belonged to the tribe of Zebulun, in a remote corner of the land of Israel; for the Spirit, which like the wind, *blows where it listed*, will as easily find out Jonah in Galilee as Isaiah at Jerusalem. We find also that he was a messenger of mercy to Israel in the reign of Jeroboam the second; for the success of his arms, in the *restoring of the coast of Israel*, is said to be *according to the word of the Lord which he spoke by the hand of his servant Jonah the prophet*. Those prophecies were not committed to writing, but this against Nineveh was, chiefly for the sake of the story that depends upon it, and that is recorded chiefly for the sake of Christ, of whom Jonah was a type; it contains also very remarkable instances of human infirmity in Jonah, and of God's mercy both in pardoning repenting sinners, witness Nineveh, and in bearing with repining saints, witness Jonah.

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter we have, I. A command given to Jonah to preach at Nineveh (v. 1, 2). II. Jonah's disobedience to that command (v. 3). III. The pursuit and arrest of him for that disobedience by a storm, in which he was asleep (v. 4-6). IV. The discovery of him, and his disobedience, to be the cause of the storm (v. 7-10). V. The casting of him into the sea, for the stilling of the storm (v. 11-16). VI. The miraculous preservation of his life there in the belly of a fish (v. 17), which was his reservation for further services.

CHAPTER 2

We left Jonah in the belly of the fish, and had reason to think we should hear no more of him, that if he were not destroyed by the waters of the sea he would be consumed in the bowels of that monster, "out of whose mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire, and whose breath kindles coals," Job 41:19, 21. But God brings his people through fire, and through water (Ps. 66:12); and by his power, behold, Jonah the prophet is yet alive, and is heard of again. In this chapter God hears from him, for we find him praying; in the next Nineveh hears from him, for we find him preaching. In his prayer we have, I. The great distress and danger he was in (v. 2, 3, 5, 6). II. The despair he was thereby almost reduced to (v. 4). III. The encouragement he took to himself, in this deplorable condition (v. 4, 7). IV. The assurance he had of God's favor to him (v. 6, 7). V. The warning and instruction he gives to others (v. 8). VI. The praise and glory of all given to God (v. 9). In the last verse we have Jonah's deliverance out of the belly of the fish, and

his coming safe and sound upon dry land again.

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter we have, I. Jonah's mission renewed, and the command for a second time given him to go preach at Nineveh (v. 1, 2). II. Jonah's message to Nineveh faithfully delivered, by which its speedy overthrow was threatened (v. 3, 4). III. The repentance, humiliation, and reformation of the Ninevites hereupon (v. 5-9). IV. God's gracious revocation of the sentence passed upon them, and the preventing of the ruin threatened (v. 10).

CHAPTER 4

We read, with a great deal of pleasure, in the close of the foregoing chapter, concerning the repentance of Nineveh; but in this chapter we read, with a great deal of uneasiness, concerning the anger of Jonah; and, as there is joy in heaven and earth for the conversion of sinners, so there is grief for those who resist God's will. In all the book of God we scarcely find a "servant of the Lord" (and such a one we are sure Jonah was, for the scripture calls him so) so very much out of temper as he is here, so very peevish and provoking to God himself. In the first chapter we had him fleeing from the face of God; but here we have him, in effect, flying in the face of God; and, which is more grieving to us, there we had an account of his repentance and return to God; but here, though no doubt he did repent, yet, as in Solomon's case, no account is left us of his recovering himself; but, while we read with wonder of his perverseness, we read with no less wonder of God's tenderness towards him, by which it appeared that he had not cast him off. Here is, I. Jonah's objection at God's mercy to Nineveh, and the fret he was in about it (v. 1-3). II. The gentle reproof God gave him for it (v. 4). III. Jonah's discontent at the withering of the gourd, and his justifying himself in that discontent (v. 5-9). IV. God's improving it for his conviction, that he ought not to be angry at the sparing of Nineveh (v. 10-11). Man's badness and God's goodness serve here for a foil to each other, that the former may appear the more exceedingly sinful and the latter the more exceedingly gracious.

The Prophecy of Micah

We shall have some account of this prophet in the first verse of the book of his prophecy; and therefore shall here only observe that, being contemporary with the prophet Isaiah (only that he began to prophesy a little after him), there is a near resemblance between that prophet's prophecy and this; and there is a prediction of the advancement and establishment of the gospel-church, which both of them have, almost in the same words, that out of the mouth of two such witnesses so great a word might be established. Compare Isa. 2:2, 3, with Mic. 4:1, 2. Isaiah's prophecy is said to be concerning *Judah and Jerusalem*, but Micah's concerning *Samaria and Jerusalem*; for, though this prophecy be dated only by the reigns of the kings of Judah, yet it refers to the kingdom of Israel, the approaching ruin of which, in the captivity of the ten tribes, he plainly foretells and sadly laments. What we find here in writing was but an abstract of the sermons he preached during the reigns of three kings. The scope of the whole is, I. To convince sinners of their sins, by setting them in order before them, charging both Israel and Judah with idolatry, materialism, oppression, contempt of the word of God, and their rulers especially, both in church and state, with the abuse of their power; and also by showing them the judgments of God ready to break in upon them for their sins. II. To comfort God's people with promises of mercy and deliverance, especially with an assurance of the coming of the Messiah and of the grace of the gospel through him. It is remarkable concerning this prophecy, and confirms its authority, that we find two quotations out of it made publicly upon very solemn occasions, and both referring to very great events. 1. One is a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem (3:12), which we find quoted in the Old Testament, by *the elders of the land* (Jer. 26:17, 18), in justification of Jeremiah, when he foretold the judgments of God coming upon Jerusalem, and to stay the proceedings of the court against him. "Micah (say they) foretold that *Zion should be ploughed as a field*, and Hezekiah did not put him to death; why then should we punish Jeremiah for saying the same?" 2. Another is a prediction of the birth of Christ (5:2) which we find quoted in the New Testament, by the *chief priests and scribes of the people*, in answer to Herod's enquiry, *where Christ should be born* (Mt. 2:5, 6); for still we find that to him bear all the prophets witness.

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter we have, I. The title of the book (v. 1), and a preface demanding attention (v. 2). II. Warning given of desolating judgments hastening upon the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (v. 3, 4), and all for sin (v. 5). III. The particulars of the destruction specified (v. 6, 7). IV. The greatness of the destruction illustrated, 1. By the prophet's sorrow for it (v. 8, 9). 2. By the general sorrow that should be for it, in the several places that must expect to share in it (v. 10-16). These prophecies of Micah might well be called his lamentations.

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter we have, I. The sins with which the people of Israel are charged—covetousness and oppression, fraudulent and violent practices (v. 1, 2), dealing barbarously, even with women and children, and other harmless people (v. 8, 9). Opposition of God's prophets and silencing them (v. 6, 7), and delighting in false prophets (v. 11). II. The judgments with which they are threatened for those sins, that they should be humbled, and impoverished (v. 3-5),

and banished (v. 10). III. Gracious promises of comfort, reserved for the good people among them, in the Messiah (v. 12, 13). And this is the sum and scope of most of the chapters of this and other prophecies.

CHAPTER 3

What the apostle says of another of the prophets is true of this, who was also his contemporary—"Isaiah is very bold," Rom. 10:20. So, in this chapter, Micah is very bold in reproving and threatening the great men that were the ringleaders in sin; and he gives the reason (v. 8) why he was so bold, because he had commission and instruction from God to say what he said, and was carried out in it by a higher spirit and power than his own. Leadership and ministry are two great ordinances of God, for good to his church, but these were both corrupted and the intentions of them perverted; and upon those that abused them, and so abused the church with them, the prophet is very severe, and justly so. I. He gives them their lesson severally, reproving and threatening princes (v. 1-4) and false flattering prophets (v. 5-7). II. He gives them their lesson jointly, putting them together, as acting in conjunction for the ruin of the kingdom, which they should see the ruins of (v. 9-12).

CHAPTER 4

Comparing this chapter with the close of the foregoing chapter, the comfortable promises here with the terrible threatening there, we may, with the apostle, "behold the goodness and severity of God," (Rom. 11:22), towards the Jewish church which fell, severity when Zion was ploughed as a field, but towards the Christian church, which was built upon the ruins of it, goodness, great goodness; for it is here promised, I. That it shall be advanced and enlarged by the accession of the nations to it (v. 1, 2). II. That it shall be protected in tranquility and peace (v. 3, 4). III. That it shall be kept close, and constant, and faithful to God (v. 5). IV. That under Christ's government, all its grievances shall be settled down (v. 6, 7). V. That it shall have an ample and flourishing dominion (v. 8). VI. That its troubles shall be brought to a happy issue at length (v. 9, 10). VII. That its enemies shall be disquieted, nay, that they shall be destroyed in and by their attempts against it (v. 11-13).

CHAPTER 5

In this chapter we have, I. A prediction of the troubles and distresses of the Jewish nation (v. 1). II. A promise of the Messiah, and of his kingdom, to support the people of God in the day of these troubles. 1. Of the birth of the Messiah (v. 2, 3). 2. Of his advancement (v. 4). 3. Of his protection of his people, and his victory over his and their enemies (v. 5, 6). 4. Of the great world by it (v. 7). 5. Of the destruction of the enemies of the church, both the external, that attack it, and the internal, that expose it (v. 8-15).

CHAPTER 6

After the precious promises in the two foregoing chapters, relating to the Messiah's kingdom, the prophet is here directed to set the sins of Israel in order before them, for their conviction and

humiliation, as necessary to make way for the comfort of gospel-grace. Christ's forerunner was to reprove, and to preach repentance, and so prepared his way. Here, I. God enters an action against his people for their base ingratitude, and the bad returns they had made him for his favors (v. 1-5). II. He shows the wrong course they should have taken (v. 6-8). III. He calls upon them to hear the voice of his judgments, and sets the sins in order before them for which he still proceeded in his controversy with them (v. 9), their injustice (v. 10-15), and their idolatry (v. 16), for both which ruin was coming upon them.

CHAPTER 7

In this chapter, I. The prophet, in the name of the church, sadly laments the woeful decay of religion in the age wherein he lived, and the surge of wickedness and immorality which overwhelmed the nation, which leveled the differences, and bore down the fences, of all that is just and sacred (v. 1-6). II. The prophet, for the sake of the church, prescribes comforts, which may be of use at such a time, and gives counsel what to do. 1. They must have an eye to God (v. 7). 2. They must courageously bear up against the aggression of the enemy (v. 8-10). 3. They must patiently lie down under the rebukes of their God (v. 9). 4. They must expect no other than that the trouble would continue long, and must endeavor to make the best of it (v. 11-13). 5. They must encourage themselves with God's promises, in answer to the prophet's prayers (v. 14, 15). 6. They must foresee the fall of their enemies, that now triumphed over them (v. 16, 17). 7. They must themselves triumph in the mercy and grace of God, and his faithfulness to his covenant (v. 18-20), and with that comfortable word the prophecy concludes.

The Prophecy of Nahum

The name of this prophet signifies a *comforter*; for it was a charge given to all the prophets, *Comfort you, comfort you, my people*: and even this prophet, though wholly taken up in foretelling the destruction of Nineveh, which speaks terror to the Assyrians, is, even in that, comforter to the ten tribes of Israel, who, it is probable, were now lately carried captives into Assyria. It is very uncertain at what time he lived and prophesied, but it is most probable that he lived in the time of Hezekiah, and prophesied against Nineveh, after the captivity of Israel by the king of Assyria, which was in the ninth year of Hezekiah, and before Sennacherib's invading Judah, which was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, for to that attempt, and the defeat of it, it is supposed, the first chapter has reference; and it is probable that it was delivered a little before it, for the encouragement of God's people in that day of treading down and perplexity. There is a presumption that the two other chapters of this book were delivered by Nahum some years after, perhaps in the reign of Manasseh, and in that reign the Jewish chronologies generally place him, somewhat nearer to the time when Nineveh was conquered, and the Assyrian monarchy reduced, by Cyaxares and Nebuchadnezzar, some time before the first captivity of Judah. It is probable that Nahum did by word of mouth prophesy many things concerning Israel and Judah, as it is certain that Jonah did (2 Ki. 14:25), though we have nothing of either of them in writing, but what related to Nineveh, of which though a great and ancient city, yet probably we should never have heard in sacred writ if the Israel of God had not had some concern in it.

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter we have, I. The message of the book, (v. 1). II. A magnificent display of the glory of God, in a mixture of wrath and justice against the wicked, and mercy and grace towards his people, and the discovery of his majesty and power in both (v. 2-8). III. A particular application of this (as most interpreters think) to the destruction of Sennacherib and the Assyrian army, when they besieged Jerusalem, which was a very memorable and illustrious instance of the power both of God's justice and of his mercy, and spoke abundance of terror to his enemies and encouragement to his faithful servants (v. 9-16).

CHAPTER 2

We now come closer to Nineveh, that great city; she took, not warning by the destruction of her armies and the fall of her king, and therefore may expect, since she persists in her enmity to God, that he will proceed in his controversy with her. Here is foretold, I. The approach of the enemy that should destroy Nineveh, and the terror of his military preparations (v. 1-5). II. The taking of the city (v. 6). III. The captivity of the queen, the flight of the inhabitants, the seizing of all its wealth, and the great terror it should be in (v. 7-10). IV. All this is traced up to its true causes—their sinning against God and God's appearing against them (v. 11-13). All this was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar, in the first year of his reign, in conjunction with Cyaxares, or Ahasuerus, king of the Medes, conquered Nineveh, and made himself master of the Assyrian monarchy.

CHAPTER 3

This chapter goes on with the burden of Nineveh, and concludes it. I. The sins of that great city are charged upon it, murder (v. 1), whoredom and witchcraft (v. 4), and a general extent of wickedness (v. 19). II. Judgments are here threatened against it, blood for blood (v. 2, 3), and shame for shameful sins (v. 5-7). III. Instances are given of the like desolations brought upon other places for the like sins (v. 8-11). IV. The overthrow of all those things which they depended upon, and put confidence in, are foretold (v. 12-19).

The Prophecy of Habakkuk

It is probable conjecture of the modern chronologies that he lived and prophesied in the reign of king Manasseh, when wickedness abounded, and destruction was hastening on, destruction by the Chaldeans, whom this prophet mentions as the instruments of God's judgments; and Manasseh was himself carried to Babylon, as an earnest of what should come afterwards. We have in it a lively representation of the intercourse and communion between a gracious God and a gracious soul. The whole refers particularly to the invasion of the land of Judah by the Chaldeans, which brought spoil upon the people of God, a just punishment of the spoil they had been guilty of among themselves; but it is of general use, especially to help us through that great temptation with which good men have in all ages been exercised, arising from the power and prosperity of the wicked and the sufferings of the righteous by it. Habakkuk is an unusual Hebrew name derived from the verb habaq, "embrace". Thus his name probably means "one who embraces".

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter, I. The prophet complains to God of the violence done by the abuse of the sword of justice among his own people and the hardships thereby put upon many good people (v. 1-4). II. God by him foretells the punishment of that abuse of power by the sword of war, and the desolations which the army of the Chaldeans should make upon them (v. 5-11). III. Then the prophet complains of that too, and is grieved that the Chaldeans prevail so far (v. 12-17), so that he scarcely knows which is more to be lamented, the sin or the punishment of it, for in both many harmless good people are very great sufferers. It is well that there is a day of judgment, and a future state, before us, in which it shall be eternally well with all the righteous, and with them only, and ill with all the wicked, and them only; so the present seeming disorders of Providence shall be set to rights, and there will remain no matter of complaint whatsoever.

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter we have an answer expected by the prophet (v. 1), and returned by the Spirit of God, to the complaints which the prophet made of the violence's and victories of the Chaldeans in the close of the foregoing chapter. The answer is, I. That after God has served his own purposes by the prevailing power of the Chaldeans, has tried the faith and patience of his people, and distinguished between the hypocrites and the sincere among them, he will reckon with the Chaldeans, will humble and bring down, not only that proud monarch Nebuchadnezzar, but that proud monarchy, for their boundless and insatiable thirst after dominion and wealth, for which they themselves should at length be made a prey (v. 2-8). II. That not they only, but all other sinners like them, should perish under a divine woe. 1. Those that are covetous, are greedy of wealth and honors (v. 9, 11). 2. Those that are injurious and oppressive, and raise estates by wrong and rapine (v. 12-14). 3. Those that promote drunkenness that they may expose their neighbors to shame (v. 15-17). 4. Those that worship idols (v. 18-20).

CHAPTER 3

Still the correspondence is kept up between God and his prophet. In the first chapter he spoke to God, then God to him, and then he to God again; in the second chapter God spoke wholly to him by the Spirit of prophecy; now, in this chapter, he speaks wholly to God by the Spirit of prayer, for he would not let the intercourse drop on his side, like a genuine son of Abraham, who "returned not to his place until God had left communing with him." Gen. 18:33. The prophet's prayer, in this chapter, is in imitation of David's psalms, for it is directed "to the chief musician," and is set to musical instruments. The prayer is left upon record for the use of the church, and particularly of the Jews in their captivity, while they were waiting for their deliverance, promised by the vision in the foregoing chapter. I. He earnestly begs of God to relieve and support his people in affliction, to hasten their deliverance, and to comfort them in the mean time (v. 2). II. He calls to mind the experiences which the church formerly had of God's glorious and gracious appearances on her behalf, when he brought Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness to Canaan, and there many a time wrought wonderful deliverances for them (v. 3-15). III. He affects himself with a holy concern for the present troubles of the church, but encourages himself and others to hope that the issue will be comfortable and glorious at last, though all visible means fail (v. 16-19).

The Prophecy of Zephaniah

This prophet is placed last, as he was last in time, of all the Minor Prophets before the captivity, and not long before Jeremiah, who lived at the time of the captivity. He foretells the general destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and sets their sins in order before them, which had provoked God to bring their ruin upon them, calls them to repentance, threatens the neighboring nations with the like destructions, and gives encouraging promises of their joyful return out of captivity in due time, which have a reference to the grace of the gospel. We have, in the first verse, an account of the prophet and the date of his prophecy, which supersedes our enquiry concerning them here. Zephaniah means "Yahweh Hides". Zephaniah was evidently born during the latter part of the reign of King Manasseh. His name may mean that he was hidden from Manasseh's slaughter.

CHAPTER 1

After the title of the book (v. 1) here is, I. A threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, an utter destruction, by the Chaldeans (v. 2-4). II. A charge against them for their gross sin, which provoked God to bring that destruction upon them (v. 5, 6); and so he goes on in the rest of the chapter, setting both the judgments before them, that they might prevent them or prepare for them, and the sins that destroy them, that they might judge themselves, and justify God in what was brought upon them. 1. They must hold their peace because they had greatly sinned (v. 7-9). But, 2, They shall howl because the trouble will be great. The day of the Lord is near, and it will be a terrible day (v. 10-18). Such fair and timely warning as this did God give to the Jews of the approaching captivity; but they hardened their neck, which made their destruction remediless.

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter we have, I. An earnest exhortation to the nation of the Jews to repent and make their peace with God, and so to prevent the judgments threatened before it was too late (v. 1-3), and this inferred from the revelation of God's wrath against them in the foregoing chapter. II. A denunciation of the judgments of God against several of the neighboring nations that had assisted, or rejoiced in, the calamity of Israel. 1. The Philistines (v. 4-7). 2. The Moabites and Ammonites (v. 8-11). 3. The Ethiopians and Assyrians (v. 12-15). All these shall drink of the same cup of trembling that is put into the hands of God's people, as was also foretold by other prophets before and after.

CHAPTER 3

We now return to Jerusalem, and must again hear what God has to say to her, I. By way of reproof and threatening, for the abundance of wickedness that was found in her, of which various instances are given, with the aggravations of them (v. 1-7). II. By way of promise of mercy and grace, which God had yet in reserve for them. Two general heads of promises here are: – 1. That God would bring in a glorious work of reformation among them, cleanse them

from their sins, and bring them home to himself; many promises of this kind here are (v. 8-13).
2. That he would bring about a glorious work of salvation for them, when he had thus prepared them for it (v. 14-20). Thus the "Redeemer shall come to Zion," and to clear his own way, shall "turn away ungodliness from Jacob." These promises were to have their full accomplishment in gospel-times and gospel-graces.

The Prophecy of Haggai

The captivity in Babylon gave a very remarkable turn to the affairs of the Jewish church both in history and prophecy. It is made a signal period in our Savior's genealogy, Mt. 1:17. Nine of the twelve Minor Prophets, whose oracles we have been up till now consulting, lived and preached before that captivity, and most of them had an eye to it in their prophecies, foretelling it as the just punishment of Jerusalem's wickedness. But the last three (in whom the Spirit of prophecy took its period, until it revived in Christ's forerunner) lived and preached after the return out of captivity, not immediately upon it, but some time after. Haggai and Zechariah appeared much about the same time, eighteen years after the return, when the building of the temple was both retarded by its enemies and neglected by its friends. *Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them* (so we read Ezra 5:1), to reprove them for their carelessness, and to encourage them to revive that good work when it had stood still for some time, and to go on with it vigorously, notwithstanding the opposition they met with in it. Haggai began two months before Zechariah, who was raised up to second him, that out of the mouth of two witnesses the word might be established. But Zechariah continued longer at the work; for all Haggai's prophecies that are recorded were delivered within four months, in the second year of Darius, between the beginning of the sixth month and the end of the ninth. But we have Zechariah's prophecies dated above two years after, Zec. 7:1. Some have the honor to lead, others to last, in the work of God. The Jews ascribe to these two prophets the honor of being members of the great synagogue (as they call it), which was formed after the return out of captivity; we think it more certain, and it was their honor, and a much greater honor, that they prophesied of Christ. Haggai spoke of him as the *glory of the latter house*, and Zechariah as *the man, the branch*. In them the light of that morning star shone more brightly than in the foregoing prophecies, as they lived nearer the time of the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and now began to see his day approaching. The Septuagint makes Haggai and Zechariah to be the penmen of Ps. 138 and Ps. 146, 147, and 148.

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter, after the introduction of the prophecy, we have, I. A reproof of the people of the Jews for their laziness and sluggishness in building the temple, which had provoked God to contend with them by the judgment of famine and scarcity, with an exhortation to them to resume that good work and to prosecute it in good earnest (v. 1-11). II. The good success of this sermon, appearing in the people's return and close application to that work, wherein the prophet, in God's name, animated and encouraged them, assuring them that God was with them (v. 12-15).

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter we have three sermons preached by the prophet Haggai for the encouragement of those that are forward to build the temple. In the first he assures the builders that the glory of the house they were now building should, in spiritual respects, though not in outward, exceed that of Solomon's temple, in which he has an eye to the coming of Christ (v. 1-9). In the

second he assures them that though their sin, in delaying to build the temple, had retarded the prosperous progress of all their other affairs, yet now that they had set about it in good earnest he would bless them, and give them success (v. 10-19). In the third he assures Zerubbabel that, as a reward of his devout zeal and activity herein, he should be a favorite of Heaven, and one of the ancestors of Messiah the Prince, whose kingdom should be set up on the ruins of all opposing powers (v. 20-23).

The Prophecy of Zechariah

This prophet was colleague with the prophet Haggai, and a worker together with him in forwarding the building of the second temple (Ezra 5:1); for two are better than one. Christ sent forth his disciples two by two. Zechariah began to prophesy some time after Haggai. But he continued longer, soared higher in visions and revelations, wrote more, and prophesied more particularly concerning Christ, than Haggai had done; so *the last shall be first*: the last in time sometimes proves first in dignity. He begins with a plain practical sermon, expressive of that which was the scope of his prophecy, in the first five verses; but afterwards, to the end of ch. 6, he relates the visions he saw, and the instructions he received immediately from heaven by them. At ch. 7, from an enquiry made by the Jews concerning fasting, he takes occasion to show them the duty of their present day, and to encourage them to hope for God's favor, to the end of ch. 8, after which there are two sermons, which are both called *burdens of the word of the Lord* (one begins with ch. 9, the other with ch. 12), which probably were preached some time after; the scope of them is to reprove for sin, and threaten God's judgments against the hardhearted, and to encourage those that feared God with assurances of the mercy God had in store for his church, and especially of the coming of the Messiah and the setting up of his kingdom in the world.

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter, after the introduction (v. 1), we have, I. An awakening call to a sinful people to repent of their sins and return to God (v. 2-6). II. Great encouragement given to hope for mercy. 1. By the vision of the horses (v. 7-11). 2. By the prayer of the angel for Jerusalem, and the answer to that prayer (v. 12-17). 3. By the vision of the four carpenters that were employed to cut off the four horns with which Judah and Jerusalem were scattered (v. 18-21).

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter we have, I. Another vision which the prophet saw, not for his own entertainment, but for his satisfaction and the edification of those to whom he was sent (v. 1, 2). II. A sermon upon it, in the rest of the chapter, 1. By way of clarification of the vision, showing it to be a prediction of the replenishing of Jerusalem and of its safety and honor (v. 3-5). 2. By way of application. Here is, (1.) A use of exhortation to the Jews that were yet in Babylon, pressing them to hasten their return to their own land, (v. 6-9). (2.) A use of consolation to those that were returned, in reference to the many difficulties they had to struggle with (v. 10-12). (3.) A use of caution to all not to prescribe to God, or limit him, but patiently to wait for him (v. 13).

CHAPTER 3

The vision in the foregoing chapter gave assurances of the re-establishing of the civil interests of the Jewish nation, the promises of which terminated in Christ. Now the vision in this chapter concerns their church-state, and their ecclesiastical interests, and assures them that they shall be put into a good posture again; and the promises of this also have an eye to Christ, who is not

only our prince, but the high priest of our profession, of whom Joshua was a type. Here is, I. A vision relating to Joshua, as the representative of the church in his time, representing the disadvantages he labored under. 1. He is accused by Satan, but is brought off by Christ (v. 1, 2). 2. He appears in filthy garments, but has them changed (v. 3-5). 3. He is assured of being established in his office if he conduct himself well (v. 6, 7). II. A sermon relating to Christ, who is here called "The branch," who should be endued with all perfections for his undertaking, should be carried triumphantly through it, and by whom we should have pardon and peace (v. 8-10).

CHAPTER 4

In this chapter we have another comfortable vision, which, as it was explained to the prophet, had much in it for the encouragement of the people of God in their present straits, which were so great that they thought their case helpless, that their temple could never be rebuilt nor their city replenished; and therefore the scope of the vision is to show that God would, by his own power, perfect the work, though the assistance given to it by its friends were ever so weak, and the resistance given to it by its enemies were ever so strong. Here is, I. The awakening of the prophet to observe the vision (v. 1). II. The vision itself, of a candlestick with seven lamps, which were supplied with oil, and kept burning, immediately from two olive-trees that grew by it, one on either side (v. 2, 3). III. The general encouragement hereby intended to be given to the builders of the temple to go on in that good work, assuring them that it should be brought to perfection at last (v. 4-10). IV. The particular explication of the vision, for the illustration of these assurances (v. 11-14).

CHAPTER 5

Hitherto we have seen visions of peace only, and all the words we have heard have been good words and comfortable words. But the pillar of cloud and fire has a black and dark side towards the Egyptians, as well as a bright and pleasant side towards Israel; so have Zechariah's visions; for God's prophets are not only his ambassadors, to treat of peace with the sons of peace, but heralds, to proclaim war against those that delight in war, and persist in their rebellion. In this chapter we have two visions, by which "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." God will do great and kind things for his people, which the faithful sons of Zion shall rejoice in; but "let the sinners in Zion be afraid;" for, I. God will reckon severely with those particular persons among them that are wicked and profane, and that hated to be reformed in these times of reformation; while God is showing kindness to the body of the nation, and loading that with his blessings, they and their families shall, notwithstanding that, lie under the curse, which the prophet sees in a flying roll (v. 1-4). II. If the body of the nation hereafter degenerate, and wickedness prevail among them, it shall be carried off and hurried away with a swift destruction, under the pressing weight of divine wrath, represented by a talent of lead upon the mouth of an ephah, carried upon the wing I know not where (v. 5-11).

CHAPTER 6

The two kingdoms of providence and grace are what we are all very nearly interested in, and therefore are concerned to acquaint ourselves with, all our temporal affairs being in a necessary subjection to divine Providence, and all our spiritual and eternal concerns in a necessary dependence upon divine grace; and these two are represented to us in this chapter – the former by a vision, the latter by a type. Here is, I. God, as King of nations, ruling the world by the ministry of angels, in the vision of the four chariots (v. 1-8). II. God, as King of saints, ruling the church by the mediation of Christ, in the figure of Joshua the high priest crowned, the ceremony performed, and then explained concerning Christ (v. 9-15).

CHAPTER 7

We have done with the visions, but not with the revelations of this book; the prophet sees no more such signs as he had seen, but still "the word of the Lord came to him." In this chapter we have, I. A case of conscience proposed to the prophet by the children of the captivity concerning fasting, whether they should continue their solemn fasts which they had religiously observed during the seventy years of their captivity (v. 1-3). II. The answer to this question, which is given in this and the next chapter; and this answer was given not all at once, but by piece-meal, and, it should seem, at several times, for here are four distinct discourses which have all of them reference to this case, each of them prefaced with "the word of the Lord came," (v. 4-8 and 8:1, 18). The method of them is very observable. In this chapter, 1. The prophet sharply reproves them for the mismanagements of their fasts (v. 4-7). 2. He exhorts them to reform their lives, which would be the best way of fasting, and to take heed of those sins which brought those judgments upon them which they kept these fasts in memory of (v. 8-14). And then in the next chapter, having searched the wound, he binds it up, and heals it, with gracious assurances of great mercy God had yet in store for them, by which he would turn their fasts into feasts.

CHAPTER 8

The work of ministers is rightly to divide the word of truth and to give every one his portion. So the prophet is here instructed to do, in the further answer he gives to the case of conscience proposed about continuing the public fasts. His answer, in the foregoing chapter, is by way of reproof to those that were disobedient and would not obey the truth. But here he is ordered to change his voice, and to speak by way of encouragement to the willing and obedient. Here are two words from the Lord of hosts, and they are both good words and comfortable words. In the former of these messages (v. 1) God promises that Jerusalem shall be restored, reformed, replenished (v. 2-8), that the country shall be rich, and the affairs of the nation shall be successful, their reputation retrieved, and their state in all respects the reverse of what it had been for many years past (v. 9-15); he then exhorts them to reform what was amiss among them, that they might be ready for these favours designed them (v. 16, 17). In the latter of these messages (v. 18) he promises that their fasts should be superseded by the return of mercy (v. 19), and that thereupon they should be replenished, enriched, and strengthened, by the accession of foreigners to them (v. 20-23).

CHAPTER 9

At this chapter begins another sermon, which is continued to the end of ch. 11. It is called, "The burden of the word of the Lord," for every word of God has weight in it to those who regard it, and will be a heavy weight upon those who do not, a dead weight. Here is, I. A prophecy against the Jews' unrighteous neighbors—the Syrians, Tyrians, Philistines, and others (v. 1-6), with an intimation of mercy to some of them, in their conversion (v. 7), and a promise of mercy to God's people, in their protection (v. 8). II. A prophecy of their righteous King, the Messiah, and his coming, with a description of him (v. 9) and of his kingdom, the nature and extent of it (v. 10). III. An account of the obligation the Jews lay under to Christ for their deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon (v. 11, 12). IV. A prophecy of the victories and successes God would grant to the Jews over their enemies, as typical of our great deliverance by Christ (v. 13-15). V. A promise of great plenty, and joy, and honour, which God had in reserve for his people (v. 16, 17), which was written for their encouragement.

CHAPTER 10

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter—to encourage the Jews that had returned with hopes that though they had been under divine rebukes for their negligence in rebuilding the temple, and were now surrounded with enemies and dangers, yet God would do them good, and make them prosperous at home and victorious abroad. Now, I. They are here directed to eye the great God in all events that concerned them, and, both in the evils they suffered and in the comforts they desired, to acknowledge his hand (v. 1-4). II. They are encouraged to expect strength and success from him in all their struggles with the enemies of their church and state, and to hope that the issue would be glorious at last (v. 5-12).

CHAPTER 11

God's prophet, who, in the chapters before, was an ambassador sent to promise peace, is here a herald sent to declare war. The Jewish nation shall recover its prosperity, and shall flourish for some time and become considerable; it shall be very happy, at length, in the coming of the long-expected Messiah, in the preaching of his gospel, and in the setting up of his standard there. But, when thereby the chosen remnant among them are called in and united to Christ, the body of the nation, persisting in unbelief, shall be utterly abandoned and given up to ruin, for rejecting Christ; and it is this that is foretold here in this chapter—the Jews rejecting Christ, which was their measure-filling sin, and the wrath which for that sin came upon them to the uttermost. Here is, I. A prediction of the destruction itself that should come upon the Jewish nation (v. 1-3). II. The putting of it into the hands of the Messiah. 1. He is charged with the custody of that flock (v. 4-6). 2. He undertakes it, and bears rule in it (v. 7, 8). 3. Finding it perverse, he gives it up (v. 9), breaks his shepherd's staff (v. 10, 11), resents the indignities done him and the contempt put upon him (v. 12, 13), and then breaks his other staff (v. 14). 4. He turns them over into the hands of foolish shepherds, who, instead of preventing, shall complete their ruin, and both the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall together into the ditch (v. 15-17). This is foretold to the poor of the flock before it comes to pass, that, when it does come to pass, they may not be offended.

CHAPTER 12

The apostle (Gal. 4:25, 26) distinguishes between "Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children" – the remaining of the Jewish church that rejected Christ, and "Jerusalem that is from above, that is free, and is the mother of us all" – the Christian church, the spiritual Jerusalem, which God has chosen to put his name there; in the foregoing chapter we read the doom of the former, and left that remains to be a prey to the eagles that should be gathered to it. Now, in this chapter, we have the blessings of the latter, many precious promises made to the gospel-Jerusalem by him who (v. 1) declares his power to make them good. It is promised, I. That the attempts of the church's enemies against her shall be to their own ruin, and they shall find that it is at their peril if they do her any hurt (v. 2-4, 6). II. That the endeavors of the church's friends and patrons for her good shall be pious, regular, and successful (v. 5). III. That God will protect and strengthen the meanest and weakest that belong to his church, and work salvation for them (v. 7, 8). IV. That as a preparative for all this mercy, and a pledge of it, he will pour upon them a spirit of prayer and repentance, the effect of which shall be universal and very particular (v. 9-14). These promises were of use then to the pious Jews that lived in the troubled time under Antiochus, and other persecutors and oppressors; and they are still to be improved in every age for the directing of our prayers and the encouraging of our hopes with reference to the gospel-church.

CHAPTER 13

In this chapter we have, I. Some further promises relating to gospel-time. Here is a promise of the remission of sins (v. 1), of the reformation of manners (v. 2), and particularly of the convicting and silencing of false prophets (v. 2-6). II. A clear prediction of the sufferings of Christ and the dispersion of his disciples thereupon (v. 7), of the destruction of the greater part of the Jewish nation not long after (v. 8), and of the purifying of a remnant of them, a peculiar people to God (v. 9).

CHAPTER 14

Various things were foretold, in the two previous chapters, which should come to pass "in that day;" this chapter speaks of a "day of the Lord that cometh," a day of his judgment, and ten times in the previous chapters, and seven times in this, it is repeated, "in that day;" but what that day is that is here meant is uncertain, and perhaps will be so (as the Jews speak) till Elias comes; whether it refer to the whole period of time from the prophet's days to the days of the Messiah, or to some particular events in that time, or to Christ's coming, and the setting up of his kingdom, but different passages here seem to look as far forward as gospel-times. Now the "day of the Lord" brings with it judgment and mercy, mercy to his church, judgment to her enemies and persecutors. I. The gates of hell are here threatening the church (v. 1, 2) and yet not prevailing. II. The power of Heaven appears here for the church and against the enemies of it (v. 3, 5). III. The events concerning the church are here represented as mixed (v. 6, 7), but issuing well at last. IV. The spreading of the means of knowledge is here foretold, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom in the world (v. 8, 9), which shall be the enlargement and establishment of another Jerusalem (v. 10, 11). V. Those shall be reckoned with that fought against Jerusalem (v.

12-15) and those that neglect his worship there (v. 17-19). VI. It is promised that there shall be great resort to the church, and great purity and goodness in it (v. 16, 20, 21).

The Prophecy of Malachi

God's prophets were his witnesses to his church, each in his day, for several ages, witnesses for him and his authority, witnesses against sin and sinners, attesting the true intents of God's providences in his dealings with his people then and the kind intentions of his grace concerning his church in the days of the Messiah, to whom all the prophets bore witness, for they all agreed in their testimony; and now we have only one witness more to call, and we have done with our evidence; and though he be the last, and in him prophecy ceased, yet the Spirit of prophecy shines as clearly, as strongly, as brightly in him as in any that went before, and his testimony challenges an equal regard. The Jews say, Prophecy continued forty years under the second temple, and this prophet they call the *seal of prophecy*, because in him the series or succession of prophets broke off and came to a period. God wisely ordered it so that divine inspiration should cease for some ages before the coming of the Messiah, that that great prophet might appear the more conspicuous and distinguishable and be the more welcome. Let us consider, I. The being of the prophet. We have only his name, *Malachi*, and no account of his country or parentage. *Malachi* signifies *my angel*, which has given occasion for a belief that this prophet was indeed an angel from heaven and not a man, as that Judges 2:1. But there is no just ground for the conjecture. Prophets were messengers, God's messengers; this prophet was so; his name is the very same with that which we find in the original (3:1) for *my messenger*; and perhaps from that word he might (though, probably, he had another name) be called *Malachi*. The Chaldee, paraphrase, and some of the Jews, suggests that Malachi was the same with Ezra; but that also is groundless. Ezra was a scribe, but we never read that he was a prophet. Others, yet further from probability, make him to be Mordecai. But we have reason to conclude he was a person whose proper name was that by which he is here called; the tradition of some of the ancients is that he was of the tribe of Zebulun, and that he died young. II. The scope of the prophecy. Haggai and Zechariah were sent to reprove the people for delaying to build the temple; Malachi was sent to reprove them for the neglect of it when it was built, and for their deviation of the temple-service (for from idolatry and superstition they ran into the other extreme of impiety and irreligion), and the sins he witnesses against are the same that we find complained of in Nehemiah's time, with whom, it is probable, he was contemporary. And now that prophecy was to cease he speaks more clearly of the Messiah, and concludes with a direction to the people of God to keep in remembrance the law of Moses, while they were in expectation of the gospel of Christ.

CHAPTER 1

Thus prophet is sent first to convince and then to comfort, first to discover sin and to reprove for that and then to promise the coming of him who shall take away sin. And this method the blessed Spirit takes in dealing with souls, Jn. 16:8. He first opens the wound and then applies the healing balm. God had provided (and one would think effectually) for the engaging of Israel to himself by providences and ordinances; but it seems, by the complaints here made of them, that they received the grace of God in both these in vain. I. They were very ungrateful to God for his favors to them, and rendered not again according to the benefit they received (v. 1-5). II. They were very careless and negligent in the observance of his institutions; the priests especially were so, who were in a particular manner charged with them (v. 6-14). And what shall we say

of those whom neither providences nor ordinances work upon, and who affront God in those very things wherein they should honor him?

CHAPTER 2

There are two great ordinances which divine wisdom has instituted, the wretched deviation of both of which is complained of and sharply reprov'd in this chapter. I. The ordinance of the ministry, which is peculiar to the church, and is designed for the maintaining and keeping up of that; this was profaned by those who were themselves dignified with the honor of it and entrusted with the business of it. The priests profaned the holy things of God; this they are here charged with; their sin is aggravated, and they are severely threatened for it (v. 1-9). II. The ordinance of marriage, which is common to the world of mankind, and was instituted for the maintaining and keeping up of that; this was profaned both by the priests and by the people, in marrying strangers (v. 11, 12), treating their wives unkindly (v. 13), putting them away (v. 16), and herein dealing unfaithfully (v. 10, 14, 15). And that which was at the bottom of this and other instances of profaneness and downright atheism, thinking God altogether such a one as themselves, which was, in effect, to say, There is no God (v. 17). And these reproofs to them are warnings to us.

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter we have, I. A promise of the coming of the Messiah, and of his forerunner; and the duty he comes upon is here particularly described, both the comfort which his coming brings to his church and people and the terror which it will bring to the wicked (v. 1-6). II. A reproof of the Jews for their corrupting God's ordinances and disloyally robbing him of his dues, with a charge to them to amend this matter, and a promise that, if they did, God would return in mercy to them (v. 7-12). III. A description of the wickedness of the wicked that speak against God (v. 13-15), and of the righteousness of the righteous that speak for him, with the precious promises made to them (v. 16-18).

CHAPTER 4

We have here proper instructions given us (very proper to close the canon of the Old Testament with), I. Concerning the state of recompense and vengeance that is before us, the misery of the wicked and the happiness of the righteous in that state (v. 1-3). And this is represented to us under a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the unbelieving Jews with it, and of the comforts and triumphs of those among them that received the gospel. II. Concerning the state of trial and preparation we are now in, in which we are directed to have an eye to divine revelation, and to follow that; they then must keep to the law of Moses (v. 4) and expect a further discovery of God's will by Elijah the prophet, that is, by John Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah (v. 5, 6). The last chapter of the New Testament is much to the same purport, setting before us heaven and hell in the other world, and obliging us to adhere to the word of God in this world.