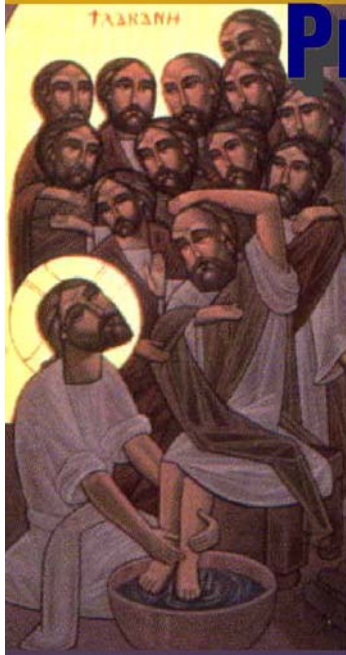




Servants' Preparation Program



Coptic Orthodox
Diocese of the
Southern
United States

*"For I have given you an example,
that you should do as I have done to you"
John 13:15*

Coptic Orthodox
Diocese of the Southern United States

**OT 103
MAJOR PROPHETS**

Servants' Preparation Program

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Lecture 1: The Holy Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Introduction:

'Prophet' is a title that sounds very great to those that understand it. Although in the eye of the world many of those that were dignified with this gift appeared to be very mean. A prophet is one that has a great intimacy and a great interest with Heaven, and consequently a commanding authority upon earth.

Prophecy is the revelation of the divine (2 Peter 1:20,21). Revelation came mostly by dreams or visions and was communicated first to the prophets and by them to the children of men (Numbers 12:6). Once God Himself spoke to the thousands of Israelites from on top of Mount Sinai. However, the effect was intolerably dreadful that the people entreated God to speak to them as He had done before, through men like themselves; "*whose terror should not make them afraid, nor their hands be heavy upon them*" (Job 33:7). God approved the motion, '*they have well said,*' said the Lord (Deuteronomy 5:27,28). The matter was settled by consent of all parties that we must never expect to hear from God any more in that way, but through prophets, who received their instructions immediately from God, with a charge to deliver them to his church.

Prior to the Old Testament being written there were prophets who were instead of Bibles to the church. Our Savior seems to reckon Abel among the prophets (Matthew 23:31,35). Enoch was a prophet; and by him that was first in prediction, which is to be last in execution—the judgment of the great day, "*Behold, the Lord comes with his holy myriad.*" (Jude 1:14) Noah was a preacher of righteousness. God said of Abraham, "*he is a prophet.*" (Gen. 20:7) Jacob foretold things to come (Gen. 49:1). All the patriarchs are called *prophets*. David writes, "*do my prophets no harm.*" (Psalms 105:15)

Moses was, beyond all comparison, the most illustrious of all the Old Testament prophets. For with him the Lord spoke "*face to face.*" (Deuteronomy 34:10) He was the first writing prophet, and his hand laid the first foundations of holy writ. Even those that were called to be his assistants in the government had the spirit of prophecy. But after the death of Moses, for some time, the Spirit of the Lord appeared and acted in the church of Israel more as a martial spirit than as a spirit of prophecy, and inspired men more for acting than speaking.

During the time of the judges we find the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Othniel, Gideon, Samson, and others, for the service of their country, with their swords, not with their pens. Messages were then sent from heaven by angels, as to Gideon and Manoah, and to others (Judges 2:1). In all the book of judges there is never once mention of a prophet, only Deborah is called a prophetess. Then the word of the Lord was precious; for there was no open vision (1 Samuel 3:1). They had the Law of Moses, recently written, to study.

But in Samuel prophecy revived and in him a famous period of the church began. It was a time of great light in a constant uninterrupted succession of prophets, till some time after the captivity, when the canon of the Old Testament was completed in Malachi. Then prophecy ceased for nearly 400 years, till the coming of the great prophet the forerunner, John the Baptist.

Some prophets were divinely inspired to write the histories of the church. But they did not put their names to their writings; they only referred for proof to the authentic records of those times, which were known to be drawn up by prophets such as Gad, Iddo and others.

David and others were prophets, to write sacred songs for the use of the church. After them we often read of prophets sent on particular errands, and raised up for special public services, among whom the most famous were Elijah and Elisha in the kingdom of Israel. But none of these put their prophecies in writing, nor have we any remains of them but some fragments in the histories of their times. There was nothing of their own writing (that I remember) but one epistle of Elijah's in 2 Chronicles 21:12.

But towards the latter end of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, it pleased God to direct his servants the prophets to write and publish some of their sermons, or abstracts of them. The dates of many of their prophecies are uncertain, but the earliest of them was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and Jeroboam the second, his contemporary, king of Israel, about 200 years before the captivity, and not long after Joash had slain Zechariah the son of Jehoiada in the courts of the temple. If they begin to murder the prophets, yet they shall not murder their prophecies; these shall remain as witnesses against them.

Hosea was the first of the writing prophets; and Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, published their prophecies about the same time. Isaiah began some time after, but his prophecy is placed first, because it is the largest of them all, and because most of the prophecies are about Him to whom all the prophets bore witness. Indeed so much of the prophecies are about the Lord Jesus Christ that Isaiah is justly styled the *Evangelical Prophet*, and, by some of the ancient, a *fifth Evangelist*. We shall have the general title of this book (v. 1) and therefore shall here only observe some things,

I. Concerning the prophet himself

He was, according to Jewish tradition, of the royal family, his father being the brother to king Uzziah. He was certainly often at court, especially in Hezekiah's time, as we find in his story. Many think that is why his style is more curious and polite than that of some other of the prophets, and, in some places, exceedingly lofty and soaring.

The Spirit of God at times served His own purpose by the particular genius (gifts) of the prophet. For prophets were not speaking trumpets, *through* which the Spirit spoke, but speaking men, *by* whom the Spirit spoke; making use of their natural powers in respect both of light and flame and advancing them above themselves

II. Concerning the prophecy

It is transcendently excellent and useful. It is given to the church of God in serving for conviction of sin, direction in duty, and consolation in trouble. Two great distresses are referred to in the Old Testament and comfort prescribed in reference to both. First by Sennacherib's invasion, which happened in his own time, and secondly that of the captivity in Babylon, which happened long after. In the supports and encouragement laid up for each of these times of need we find abundance of the grace of the gospel.

There were many quotes in the Gospels taken from this book; perhaps more than from any of the other holy books of prophecies in the Old Testament. Isaiah expresses testimonies concerning Christ

- ❖ Witness that of his being born of a virgin (chapter 7)
- ❖ That of his sufferings (chapter 53)

The beginning of this book abounds most with reproofs for sin and threatening of judgment. The latter end of it is full of wood words and comfortable words.

This method the Spirit of God took formerly in the prophets and does still, first to convict and then to comfort. Those that would be blessed with the comforts must submit to the convictions.

Doubtless Isaiah preached many sermons, and delivered many messages to the people that are not written in this book; similar to the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels. Probably these sermons were delivered more largely and fully than they are here related. But so much is left on record as Infinite Wisdom thought fit to convey to us "*on whom the ends of the world have come.*" These prophecies, as well as the histories of Christ, are written "*that we might believe on the name of the Son of God, and that, believing, we might have life through his name; for to us is the gospel here preached as well as unto those*" that lived then, and more clearly. O that it may be mixed with faith!

CHAPTER 1

The first verse of this chapter is intended for a title to the whole book. It is probable that this was the first sermon that this prophet was appointed to publish and to affix in writing to the door of the temple. Such proclamations are fixed to public places that all might read them (Habakkuk 2:2), and for those that might take out authentic copies of them. The original, after some time, is placed by the priests among the records of the temple.

The sermon, which is contained in this chapter, has in it,

- I. A high charge exhibited, in God's name, against the Jewish church and nation:
 - ❖ For their ungratefulness (v. 2, 3).
 - ❖ For their stubbornness (v. 5). 3.
 - ❖ For the universal corruption and degeneracy of the people (v. 4, 6, 21, 22).
 - ❖ For the perversion of justice by their rulers (v. 23).
 - ❖ A promise of a happy reformation at last, and a return to their primitive purity and prosperity (v. 25–27). All this is to be applied by us, to the communities we are members of, in their public interests, but to the state of our own souls.
- II. A sad complaint of the judgments of God, which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and by which they were brought almost to utter ruin (v. 7-9).
- III. A just rejection of those shows and shadows of religion, which they kept up among them, notwithstanding this general defection and apostasy (v. 10–15).
- IV. An earnest call to repentance and reformation, setting before them life and death, life if they complied with the call and death if they did not (v. 16–20). V. A threatening of ruin to those that would not be reformed (v. 24, 28–31).

CHAPTER 2

With this chapter begins a new sermon, which is continued in the two following chapters. The subject of this discourse is Judah and Jerusalem (v. 1).

In this chapter the prophet speaks,

- I. Of the glory of the Christian era, the New Jerusalem, the church in the messianic time, in the accession of many to it. (v. 2, 3) And also the great peace it should introduce into the world (v. 4), when he infers the duty of the house of Jacob (v. 5).
- II. Of the shame of the Jews, Jerusalem, as it was then and as it would be after its rejection of the gospel and being rejected of God.
 - ❖ Their sin was their shame (v. 6-9). 2.
 - ❖ God by his judgments would humble them and put them to shame (v. 10–17).
 - ❖ They should themselves be ashamed of their confidence in their idols and in an arm of flesh (v. 18–22).

And now which of these two Jerusalem will we be the inhabitants of—that which is full of the knowledge of God, to our everlasting honor, or that which is full of horses and chariots, and silver and gold, and such idols, which will in the end be our shame?

CHAPTER 3

The prophet goes on to foretell the desolation that was coming upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, both that by the Babylonians and that which completed their ruin, by the Romans, with some of the grounds of God's controversy with them.

God threatens:

- ❖ To deprive them of all the supports both of their life and of their government (v. 1-3).
- ❖ To leave them to fall into confusion and disorder (v. 4, 5, 12).
- ❖ To deny them the blessing of magistracy (v. 6-8).
- ❖ To strip the daughters of Zion of their ornaments (v. 17–24).
- ❖ To lay all waste by the sword of war (v. 25, 26).

The sins that provoked God to deal thus with them were:

- ❖ Their defiance of God (v. 8). 2.
- ❖ Their impudence (v. 9).
- ❖ The abuse of power to oppression and tyranny (v. 12–15).
- ❖ The pride of the daughters of Zion (v. 16).

In the midst of the chapter the prophet is directed how to address particular persons.

- ❖ To assure good people that it should be well with them, notwithstanding those general calamities (v. 10).
- ❖ To assure wicked people that, however God might, in judgment, remember mercy, yet it should go ill with them (v. 11).

O that the nations of the earth, at this day, would hearken to rebukes and warnings which this chapter gives!

CHAPTER 4

In this chapter we have:

- I. A threatening of the paucity and scarceness of man (v. 1), which might fitly enough have been added to the close of the foregoing chapter, to which it has a plain reference.
- II. A promise of the restoration of Jerusalem's peace and purity, righteousness and safety, in the days of the Messiah (v. 2-6). Thus, in wrath, mercy is remembered, and gospel grace is a sovereign relief, in reference to the terrors of the law and the desolation made by sin.

CHAPTER 5

In this chapter the prophet, in God's name, shows the people of God their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins, and the judgments which were likely to be brought upon them for their sins,

- I. By a parable, under the similitude of an unfruitful vineyard, representing the great favors God had bestowed upon them, their disappointing his expectations from them, and the ruin they had thereby deserved (v. 1-7).
- II. By listing the sins that did abound among them, with a threat of punishments in response to the sins.

- ❖ Materialism, and greediness of worldly wealth, which shall be punished with famine (v. 8–10)
- ❖ Rebellion, partying, and drunkenness (v. 11, 12, 22, 23), which shall be punished with captivity and all the miseries that attend it (v. 13–17).
- ❖ Presumption in sin, and defying the justice of God (v. 18, 19).
- ❖ Confounding the distinctions between virtue and vice, and so undermining the principles of religion (v. 20).
- ❖ Self-conceit (v. 21).
- ❖ Perverting justice and the other instances of reigning wickedness among them, for which the threat of a great and general desolation will lay all waste (v. 24, 25). And which should be brought on by a foreign invasion (v. 26–30); referring perhaps to the havoc made not long after by Sennacherib's army.

CHAPTER 6

Hitherto, it should seem, Isaiah had prophesied as a candidate, having only a virtual and tacit commission. But here we have him solemnly ordained and set apart to the prophetic office by a more express or explicit commission. As his work grew more upon his hands: or perhaps, having seen little success of his ministry, he began to think of giving it up. Therefore God saw fit to renew his commission here in this chapter. It is in such a manner as might excite and encourage his zeal and industry in the execution of it, though he seemed to labor in vain.

In this chapter we have,

- ❖ A very strong vision which Isaiah saw of the glory of God (v. 1-4), the terror it put him into (v. 5), and the relief given him against that terror by an assurance of the pardon of his sins through the live coal taken by the Seraphim from the altar, symbolizing communion (v. 6, 7).
- ❖ A very awful commission which Isaiah received to go as a prophet, in God's name (v. 8), by his preaching to harden the impenitent in sin and ripen them for ruin (v. 9–12) yet with a reservation of mercy for a remnant, (v. 13). And it was as to an evangelical prophet that these things were shown him and said to him.

CHAPTER 7

This chapter is an occasional sermon, in which the prophet sings both of mercy and judgment to those that did not perceive or understand either. He piped unto them, but they danced not, mourned unto them, but they wept not.

Here is:

- ❖ The anxiety that Ahaz had upon an attempt of the confederate forces of Syria and Israel against Jerusalem (v. 1, 2).
- ❖ The assurance, which God, by the prophet, sent him for his encouragement, that the attempt would be defeated and Jerusalem will be preserved (v. 3-9).
- ❖ The confirmation of this by a sign which God gave to Ahaz, when he refused to ask one, referring to Christ, and our redemption by him (v. 10–16).
- ❖ A threatening of the great desolation that God would bring upon Ahaz and his kingdom by the Assyrians, notwithstanding their escape from this present storm, because they went on still in their wickedness (v. 17–25). And this is written both for our comfort and for our admonition.

CHAPTER 8

This chapter, and the four next that follow are all one continued discourse or sermon, the scope of which is to show the great destruction that should now shortly be brought upon the kingdom of Israel. Also and the great disturbance that should be given to the kingdom of Judah by the

king of Assyria, and that both were for their sins. But rich provision is made of comfort for those that feared God in that dark time, referring especially to the days of the Messiah.

In this chapter we have:

- ❖ A prophecy of the destruction of the confederate kingdoms of Syria and Israel by the king of Assyria (v. 1-4).
- ❖ Of the desolation that should be made by that proud victorious prince in the land of Israel and Judah (v. 5-8).
- ❖ Great encouragement given to the people of God in the midst of those distractions; they are assured,
 - That the enemies shall not gain their point against them (v. 9, 10).
 - That if they kept up the fear of God, and were not afraid of men, they would find God their refuge (v. 11–14). While others stumbled, and fell into despair, they would be enabled to wait on God, and should see themselves reserved for better times (v. 15–18).
 - He gives a necessary caution to all not to consult with familiar spirits, for they would thereby throw themselves into despair, but to keep close to the word of God (v. 19–22). And these counsels and these comforts are still useful to us in time of trouble.

CHAPTER 9

The prophet in this chapter (according to the directions given him in chapter 3:10, 11) said to the righteous, It shall be well with thee, but Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him.

Here are:

- ❖ Gracious promises to those that adhere to the law and to the testimony; while those that seek to familiar spirits shall be driven into darkness and dimness, they shall see a great light, relief in the midst of their distresses, typical of gospel grace.
 - In the doctrine of the Messiah (v. 1-3).
 - His victories (v. 4, 5).
 - His government and dominion as Emmanuel (v. 6, 7).
- ❖ Dreadful threats against the people of Israel, who had revolted from and were enemies to the house of David. That they:
 - Should be brought to utter ruin, that their pride should bring them down (v. 8–10),
 - Their neighbors should make a prey of them (v. 11, 12),
 - For their impenitence and hypocrisy, all their ornaments and supports should be cut off (v. 13–17),
 - The wrath of God against them and their wrath one against another should bring them to utter ruin (v. 18–21).

And this is typical of the final destruction of all the enemies of the Son of David and his kingdom.

CHAPTER 11

It is a very good transition in prophecy, and a very common one, to pass from the prediction of the temporal deliverance of the church to that of the great salvation. Which in the fullness of time should be wrought out by the Lord Jesus Christ, of which the other were types and figures, to which all the prophets bore witness; and so the ancient Jews understood them. For what else was it that raised so great an expectation of the Messiah at the time he came.

Upon occasion of the prophecy of the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, here comes in a prophecy concerning the Messiah, the Prince.

- ❖ His rise out of the house of David (v. 1).

- ❖ His qualifications for His great undertaking (v. 2, 3).
- ❖ The justice and equity of His government (v. 3-5).
- ❖ The peace of His kingdom (v. 6-9).
- ❖ The accession of the Gentiles to Him (v. 10)
And with them the remnant of the Jews, that would be united with them in the Messiah's kingdom (v. 11–16).

Of all this God would now shortly give them a type, and some dark representation, in the excellent government of Hezekiah. The great peace which the nation should enjoy under him, after the ruin of Sennacherib's design, and the return of many of the ten tribes out of their dispersion to their brethren of the land of Judah, when they enjoyed that great tranquility.

CHAPTER 12

The salvation promised in the foregoing chapter was compared to that of Israel "*in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt;*" so that chapter ends. Now as Moses and the children of Israel then sang a song of praise to the glory of God (Exodus 15:1) so shall the people of God do in that day when the root of Jesse shall stand for an ensign of the people and shall be the desire and joy of all nations.

In that day,

- ❖ Every particular believer shall sing a song of praise for his own interest in that salvation (v. 1, 3). "*Thou shalt say, Lord, I will praise thee.*" Thanksgiving work shall be closet work.
- ❖ Many in concert shall join in praising God for the common benefit arising from this salvation (v. 4-6): "*You shall say, Praise you the Lord.*" Thanksgiving work shall be congregation-work; and the praises of God shall be publicly sung in the congregations of the upright.

CHAPTER 13

Up to this point the prophecies of the book related only to Judah and Israel, and Jerusalem especially. But now the prophet begins to look abroad, and to read the doom of divers of the neighboring states and kingdoms. For he that is King of Israel is also King of nations, and rules in the affairs of the children of men as well as in those of his own children.

But the nations to whom these prophecies relate were such as the people of God were in some way or other conversant and concerned with, such as had been kind or unkind to Israel, and accordingly God would deal with them, either in favor or in wrath; for the Lord's portion is his people, and to them he has an eye in all the dispensations of his providence concerning those about them (Deuteronomy 32:8, 9).

The threats we find here against Babylon, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Tyre, etc., were intended for comfort to those in Israel that feared God, but were terrified and oppressed by those potent neighbors, and for alarm to those among them that were wicked. If God would thus severely reckon with those for their sins that knew Him not, and made no profession of His name, how severe would He be with those that were called by His name and yet lived in rebellion against Him! And perhaps the directing of particular prophecies to the neighboring nations might invite some of those nations to the reading of the Jews' Bible, and so they might be brought to their faith.

This chapter and that, which follows, contain what God had to say to Babylon and Babylon's king, who were then not well known to Israel. But would in process of time becomes a greater enemy to them than any other had been, for which God would at last reckon with them.

In this chapter we have,

- I. A general rendezvous of the forces that were to be employed against Babylon (v. 1-5).
- II. The dreadfully bloody work that those forces should make in Babylon (v. 6-18).
- III. The utter ruin and desolation of Babylon, which this should end in (v. 19-22).

CHAPTER 14

In this chapter,

- I. More weight is added to the burden of Babylon, enough to sink it like a mill-stone;
 - ❖ It is Israel's cause that is to be pleaded in this quarrel with Babylon (v. 1-3).
 - ❖ The king of Babylon, for the time being, shall be remarkably brought down and triumphed over (v. 4-20).
 - ❖ The whole race of the Babylonians shall be cut off and extirpated (v. 21-23).
- II. A confirmation of the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was a thing at a distance, is here given in the prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian army that invaded the land, which happened not long after (v. 24-27).
- III. The success of Hezekiah against the Philistines is here foretold, and the advantages, which his people would gain thereby (v. 28-32).

CHAPTER 15

This chapter and that which follows it are the burden of Moab. It announces a prophecy of some great desolation that was coming upon that country, which bordered upon this land of Israel, and had often been injurious and vexatious to it. Though the Moabites were descended from Lot, Abraham's kinsman and companion, and though the Israelites, by the appointment of God, had spared them when they might both easily and justly have cut them off with their neighbors.

In this chapter we have

- I. Great lamentation made by the Moabites, and by the prophet himself for them (v. 1-5).
- II. The great calamities which should occasion that lamentation and justify it (v. 6-9).

CHAPTER 16

This chapter continues and concludes the burden of Moab.

In it

- I. The prophet gives good counsel to the Moabites, to reform what was amiss among them, and particularly to be kind to God's people, as the likeliest way to prevent the judgments before threatened (v. 1-5).
- II. Fearing they would not take this counsel (they were so proud), he goes on to foretell the lamentable devastation of their country, and the confusion they should be brought to, and this within three years (v. 6-14).

CHAPTER 17

Syria and Ephraim were confederate against Judah (chapter 7:1, 2), and, they being so closely linked together in their counsels. This chapter, though it be entitled "the burden of Damascus" (which was the head city of Syria), reads the doom of Israel too.

- I. The destruction of the strong cities both of Syria and Israel is here foretold (v. 1-5 and v. 9-11).
- II. In the midst of judgment mercy is remembered to Israel, and a gracious promise made that a remnant should be preserved from the calamities and should get good by them (v. 6-8).

- III. The overthrow of the Assyrian army before Jerusalem is pointed at (v. 12–14). In order of time this chapter should be placed next after chapter 9, for the destruction of Damascus, here foretold, happened in the reign of Ahaz, (2 Kings 16:9).

CHAPTER 18

Whatever country it is that is meant here by "*the land shadowing with wings*," here is a woe denounced against it, for God has, upon his people's account, a quarrel with it.

- I. They threaten God's people (v. 1, 2).
- II. All the neighbors are here upon called to take notice what will be the issue (v. 3).
- III. Though God seem unconcerned in the distress of his people for a time, he will at length appear against their enemies and will remarkably cut them off (v. 4-6).
- IV. This shall contribute very much to the glory of God (v. 7).

CHAPTER 19

As Assyria was a breaking rod to Judah, with which it was smitten, so Egypt was a broken reed, with which it was cheated. Therefore God had a quarrel with them both.

We have before read the doom of the Assyrians; now here we have the burden of Egypt, a prophecy concerning that nation.

- I. That it should be greatly weakened and brought low, and should be as contemptible among the nations as now it was considerable, rendered so by a complication of judgments which God would bring upon them (v. 1–17).
- II. That at length Christian Faith and, Christian altar should be brought into Egypt, and set up there, in part by the Jews that should flee thither for refuge, but more fully by the preachers of the gospel of Christ, through whose ministry churches should be planted in Egypt in the says of Christ (v 18–25). Which would abundantly balance all the calamities here threatened.

CHAPTER 20

This chapter is a prediction of the carrying away of multitudes both of the Egyptians and the Ethiopians into captivity by the king of Assyria.

Here is:

- I. The sign by which this was foretold, which was the prophet's going for some time barefoot and almost naked, like a poor captive (v. 1-2).
- II. The explication of that sign, with application to Egypt and Ethiopia (v. 3-5).
- III. The good use which the people of God should make of this, which is never to trust in an arm of flesh, because thus it will deceive them (v. 6).

CHAPTER 21

In this chapter we have a prophecy of sad times coming, and heavy burdens,

- I. Upon Babylon, here called "*the desert of the sea*," that it should be destroyed by the Medes and Persians with a terrible destruction, which yet God's people should have advantage by (v. 1–10).
- II. Upon Dumah, or Idumea (v. 11, 12).
- III. Upon Arabia, or Kedar, the desolation of which country was very near (v. 13–17). These and other nations which the princes and people of Israel had so much to do with the prophets of Israel could not but have something to say to. Foreign affairs must be taken notice of as well as domestic ones, and news from abroad inquired after as well as news at home.

CHAPTER 22

We have now come nearer home, for this chapter is "the burden of the valley of vision," Jerusalem. Other places had their burden for the sake of their being concerned in some way or other with Jerusalem and were reckoned with either as spiteful enemies or deceitful friends to the people of God. But now let Jerusalem hear her own doom.

This chapter concerns:

- I. The city of Jerusalem itself and the neighborhood depending upon it. Here is:
 - ❖ A prophecy of the grievous distress they should shortly be brought into by Sennacherib's invasion of the country and laying siege to the city (v. 1-7).
 - ❖ A reproof given them for their misconduct in that distress, in two things:
 - Not having an eye to God in the use of the means of their preservation (v. 8-11).
 - Not humbling themselves under His mighty hand (v. 12-14).
- II. The court of Hezekiah, and the officers of that court. 1. The displacing of Shebna, a bad man, and turning him out of the treasury (v. 15-19, 25). 2. The preferring of Eliakim, who should do his country better service, to his place (v. 20-24).

CHAPTER 23

This chapter is concerning Tyre, an ancient wealthy city situated upon the sea, and for many ages one of the most celebrated cities for trade and merchandise in those parts of the world. The lot of the tribe of Asher bordered upon it (see Joshua 19:29). It is called "*the strong city Tyre.*" We seldom find it a dangerous enemy to Israel, but sometimes their faithful ally, as in the reigns of David and Solomon. For trading cities maintain their grandeur, not by the conquest of their neighbors, but by commerce with them.

This chapter foretells

- I. The lamentable desolation of Tyre, which was performed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army, about the time that they destroyed Jerusalem; and a hard task they had of it, as appears Ezek. 29:18, where they are said to have "served a hard service against Tyre," and yet to have no wages (v. 1-14).
- II. The restoration of Tyre after seventy years, and the return of the Tyrians out of their captivity to their trade again (v. 15-18).

CHAPTER 24

It is agreed that here begins a new sermon, which is continued to the end of chapter 27. And in it the prophet, according to the directions he had received, does, in many precious promises, "*say to the righteous, It shall be well with them;*" and, in many dreadful threats, he says, "*Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them*" (3:10, 11); and these are interwoven, that they may illustrate each other.

This chapter is mostly threats and, as the judgments threatened are very sore and grievous ones, so the people threatened with those judgments are very many. It is not the burden of any particular city or kingdom, as those before, but the burden of the whole earth.

The word indeed signifies only the land, because our own land is commonly to us as all the earth. But it is here explained by another word that is not so confined; it is the world (v. 4); so that it must at least take in a whole neighborhood of nations.

- ❖ Some think (and very probably) that it is a prophecy of the great havoc that Sennacherib and his Assyrian army should now shortly make of many of the nations in that part of the world.
- ❖ Others make it to point at the like devastation which, about 100 years afterwards, Nebuchadnezzar and his armies should make in the same countries, going from one kingdom to another, not only to conquer them, but to ruin them and lay them waste; for that was the method which those eastern nations took in their wars.

The promises that are mixed with the threats are intended for the support and comfort of the people of God in those very calamitous times. And, since here are no particular nation's names either by whom or on whom those desolation should be brought, I see not but it may refer to both these events. Nay, the scripture has many fulfilling, and we ought to give it its full latitude; and therefore I incline to think that the prophet, from those and the like instances which he had a particular eye to, designs here to represent in general the calamitous state of mankind, and the many miseries which human life is liable to, especially those that attend the wars of the nations.

Surely the prophets were sent, not only to foretell particular events, but to form the minds of men to virtue and piety, and for that end their prophecies were written and preserved even for our learning, and therefore ought not to be looked upon as of private interpretation.

Now since a thorough conviction of the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy will go far towards bringing us to God; and drawing out our affections towards another world, the prophet here shows what vexation of spirit we must expect to meet with in these things, that we may never take up our rest in them, nor promise ourselves satisfaction any where short of the enjoyment of God.

In this chapter we have,

- I. A threatening of desolating judgments for sin (v. 1–12), to which is added an assurance that in the midst of them good people should be comforted (v. 13–15).
- II. A further threatening of the like desolation (v. 16–22), to which is added an assurance that in the midst of all God should be glorified.

CHAPTER 25

After the threats of wrath in the foregoing chapter we have here:

- I. Thankful praises for what God had done, which the prophet, in the name of the church, offers up to God, and teaches us to offer the like (v. 1-5).
- II. Precious promises of what God would yet further do for his church, especially in the grace of the gospel (v. 6-8).
- III. The church's triumph in God over her enemies thereupon (v. 9–12). This chapter looks as pleasantly upon the church as the former looked dreadfully upon the world.

CHAPTER 26

This chapter is a song of holy joy and praise, in which the great things God had engaged, in the foregoing chapter, to do for his people against his enemies and their enemies are celebrated. It is prepared to be sung when that prophecy should be accomplished; for we must be forward to meet God with our thanksgivings when he is coming towards us with his mercies.

Now the people of God are here taught,

- I. To triumph in the safety and holy security both of the church in general and of every particular member of it, under the divine protection (v. 1-4).

- II. To triumph over all opposing powers (v. 5, 6).
- III. To walk with God, and wait for him, in the worst and darkest times, v. 7-9).
- IV. To lament the stupidity of those who regarded not the providence of God, either merciful or afflictive (v. 10, 11).
- V. To encourage themselves, and one another, with hopes that God would still continue to do them good (v. 12, 14), and engage themselves to continue in his service (v. 13).
- VI. To recollect the kind providence of God towards them in their low and distressed condition, and their conduct under those providence (v. 15–18).
- VII. To rejoice in hope of a glorious deliverance, which should be as a resurrection to them (v. 19), and to retire in the expectation of it (v. 20, 21). And this is written for the support and assistance of the faith and hope of God's people in all ages, even those upon whom the ends of the world have come.

CHAPTER 27

In this chapter the prophet goes on to show,

- I. What great things God would do for his church and people, which should now shortly be accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib and the destruction of the Assyrian army; but it is expressed generally, for the encouragement of the church in after ages, with reference to the power and prevalence of her enemies.
 - ❖ Those proud oppressors should be reckoned with (v. 1).
 - ❖ That care should be taken of the church, as of God's vineyard (v. 2, 3).
 - ❖ That God would let fall his controversy with the people, upon their return to him (v. 4, 5).
 - ❖ That he would greatly multiply and increase them (v. 6).
 - ❖ That, as to their afflictions, the property of them should be altered (v. 7), they should be mitigated and moderated (v. 8), and sanctified (v. 9).
 - ❖ That though the church might be laid waste, and made desolate, for a time (v. 10, 11), yet it should be restored, and the scattered members should be gathered together again (v. 12, 13). All this is applicable to the grace of the gospel, and God's promises to, and providence concerning, the Christian church, and such as belong to it.

CHAPTER 28

In this chapter,

- I. The Ephraimites are reprov'd and threaten'd for their pride and drunkenness, their security and sensuality (v. 1-8). But, in the midst of this, here is a gracious promise of God's favor to the remnant of his people (v.5, 6).
- II. They are likewise reprov'd and threaten'd for their dullness and stupidity to profit by the instructions which the prophets gave them in God's name (v. 9–13).
- III. The rulers of Jerusalem are reprov'd and threaten'd for their insolent contempt of God's judgments, and setting them at defiance; and, after a gracious promise of Christ and his grace, they are made to know that the vain hopes of escaping the judgments of God with which they flattered themselves would certainly deceive them (v. 14–22).
- IV. All this is confirm'd by a comparison borrow'd from the method which the husbandman takes with his ground and grain, according to which they must expect God would proceed with his people, whom he had lately call'd his threshing and the corn of his floor (Isaiah. 21:10) (v. 23–29).

This is written for our admonition, and is profitable for reproof and warning to us.

CHAPTER 29

This woe to Ariel, which we have in this chapter, is the same with the "*burden of the valley of vision*" (chapter 22:1), and (it is very probable) points at the same event—the besieging of Jerusalem by the Assyrian army, which was cut off there by an angel; yet it is applicable to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and its last desolation by the Romans.

Here is:

- I. The event itself foretold, that Jerusalem should be greatly distressed (v. 1–4, 6), but that their enemies, who distressed them, should be baffled and defeated (v. 5, 7, 8).
- II. A reproof to three sorts of sinners:
 - ❖ Those that were stupid, and regardless of the warnings which the prophet gave them (v. 9–12).
 - ❖ Those that were formal and hypocritical in their religious performances (v. 13, 14).
 - ❖ Those politicians that atheistically and profanely despised God's providence, and set up their own projects in competition with it (v. 15, 16).
- III. Precious promises of grace and mercy to a distinguished remnant that God would sanctify, and in whom he would be sanctified, when their enemies and persecutors should be cut off (v. 17–24).

CHAPTER 30

The prophecy of this chapter seems to relate (as that in the foregoing chapter) to the approaching danger of Jerusalem and desolation of Judah by Sennacherib's invasion.

Here is:

- I. A just reproof to those who, in that distress, trusted to the Egyptians for help, and were all in a hurry to fetch succors from Egypt (v. 1-7).
- II. A terrible threatening against those who slighted the good advice which God by his prophets gave them for the repose of their minds in that distress, assuring them that whatever became of others the judgment would certainly overtake them (v. 8–17).
- III. A gracious promise to those who trusted in God, that they should not only see through the trouble, but should see happy days after it, times of joy and reformation, plenty of the means of grace, and therewith plenty of outward good things and increasing joys and triumphs (v. 18–26), and many of these promises are very applicable to gospel grace.
- IV. A prophecy of the total rout and ruin of the Assyrian army, which should be an occasion of great joy and an introduction to those happy times (v. 27–33).

CHAPTER 31

This chapter is a summing up of the foregoing chapter; the heads of it are much the same.

Here is:

- I. A woe to those who, when the Assyrian army invaded them, trusted to the Egyptians, and not to God, for help (v. 1-3).
- II. Assurance given of the care God would take of Jerusalem in that time of danger and distress (v. 4, 5).
- III. A call to repentance and reformation (v. 6, 7).
- IV. A prediction of the fall of the Assyrian army, and the fright which the Assyrian king should thereby be put into (v. 8, 9).

CHAPTER 32

This chapter seems to be such a prophecy of the reign of Hezekiah as amounts to an abridgment of the history of it, and this with an eye to the kingdom of the Messiah, whose government was typified by the thrones of the house of David, for which reason he is so often called "the Son of David."

Here is:

- I. A prophecy of that good work of reformation with which he should begin his reign, and the happy influence it should have upon the people, who had been wretchedly corrupted in the reign of his predecessor (v. 1-8).
- II. A prophecy of the great disturbance that would be given to the kingdom in the middle of his reign by the Assyrian invasion (v. 9-14).
- III. A promise of better times afterwards, towards the latter end of his reign, in respect both of piety and peace (v. 15-20), which promise may be supposed to look as far forward as the days of the Messiah.

CHAPTER 33

This chapter relates to the same events as the foregoing chapter, the distress of Judah and Jerusalem by Sennacherib's invasion and their deliverance out of that distress by the destruction of the Assyrian army. These are intermixed in the prophecy, in the way of a Pindaric.

Observe

- I. The great distress that Judah and Jerusalem should then be brought into (v. 7-9).
- II. The particular frights which the sinners in Zion should then be in (v. 13, 14)
- III. The prayers of good people to God in this distress (v. 2).
- IV. The holy security which they should enjoy in the midst of this trouble (v. 15, 16).
- V. The destruction of the army of the Assyrians (v. 1-3), in which God would be greatly glorified (v. 5, 10-12).
- VI. The enriching of the Jews with the spoil of the Assyrian camp (v. 4, 23, 24).
- VII. The happy settlement of Jerusalem, and the Jewish state, upon this. Religion shall be uppermost (v. 6), and their civil state shall flourish (v. 17-22). This was soon fulfilled, but is written for our learning.

CHAPTER 34

In this chapter we have the fatal doom of all the nations that are enemies to God's church and people. Although Edom only is mentioned, because of the old enmity of Esau to Jacob, which was typical, as much as that more ancient enmity of Cain to Abel, and flowed from the original enmity of the serpent to the seed of the woman. It is probable that this prophecy had its accomplishment in the great desolation made by the Assyrian army first, or rather by Nebuchadnezzar's army some time after, among those nations that were neighbors to Israel and had been in some way or other injurious to them.

That mighty conqueror took pride in shedding blood, and laying countries waste, and therefore, without knowing it, he was fulfilling what God here threatened against His and His people's enemies. But we have reason to think it is intended as a denunciation of the wrath of God against all those who fight against the interests of His kingdom among men, that it has its frequent accomplishment in the havoc made by the wars of the nations and other desolating judgments, and will have its full accomplishment in the final dissolution of all things at the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Here is:

- I. A demand of universal attention (v. 1).
- II. A direful scene of blood and confusion presented (v. 2-7).
- III. The reason given for these judgments (v. 8).
- IV. The continuance of this desolation, the country being made like the lake of Sodom (v. 9, 10), and the cities abandoned to wild beasts (v. 11–15).
- V. The serious approval of all this (v. 16, 17). Let us hear, and fear.

CHAPTER 35

As after a prediction of God's judgments upon the world (chapter 24) follows a promise of great mercy to be had in store for his church (chapter. 25). So here after a black and dreadful scene of confusion in the previous chapter we have, is followed by a bright and pleasant one. Though it foretells the flourishing estate of Hezekiah's kingdom in the latter part of his reign, yet surely looks as far beyond that as the prophecy in the foregoing chapter does beyond the destruction of the Edomites. Both were typical, and it concerns us most to look at those things which they were typical of, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heaven. When the world, which lies in wickedness, shall be laid in ruins, and the Jewish church, which persisted in infidelity, shall become desolation, then the New Testament church shall be set up and made to flourish.

- I. The Gentiles shall be brought into it (v. 1, 2, and 7).
- II. The well wishers to it, who were weak and timorous, shall be encouraged (v. 3, 4).
- III. Miracles shall be wrought both on the souls and on the bodies of men (v. 5, 6).
- IV. The gospel church shall be conducted in the way of holiness (v. 8, 9).
- V. It shall be brought at last to endless joy (v. 10). Thus do we find more of Christ and heaven in this chapter than one would have expected in the Old Testament.

CHAPTER 36

The prophet Isaiah is, in this and the three following chapters, a historian. For the scripture history, as well as the scripture prophecy, is given by inspiration of God, and was dictated to holy men. Many of the prophecies of the foregoing chapters had their accomplishment in Sennacherib's invading Judah and besieging Jerusalem, and the miraculous defeat he met there. Therefore his story added here, both for the explication and for the confirmation of the prophecy.

The key of prophecy is to be found in history. Here, that we might have the readier entrance, it is, as it were, hung at the door. The exact fulfilling of this prophecy might serve to confirm the faith of God's people in the other prophecies, the accomplishment of which was at a greater distance. Whether this story was taken from the book of the Kings and added here, or whether it was first written by Isaiah here and hence taken into the book of Kings, is not material. But the story is the same almost verbatim; and it was so memorable an event that it was well worthy to be twice recorded 2 Kings 18 and 19, and here, and an outline of it likewise, 2 Chr. 32. We shall be but short in our observations upon this story here, having largely explained it there.

In this chapter we have

- I. The descent which the king of Assyria made upon Judah, and his success against all the defeated cities (v. 1).
- II. The conference he desired to have with Hezekiah, and the managers on both sides (v. 2, 3).
- III. Rabshakeh's railing blasphemous speech, with which he designed to frighten Hezekiah into a submission, and persuade him to surrender at discretion (v. 4–10).

- IV. His appeal to the people, and his attempt to persuade them to desert Hezekiah, and so force him to surrender (v. 11–20).
- V. The report of this made to Hezekiah by his agents (v. 21, 22).

CHAPTER 37

In this chapter we have a further repetition of the story which we had before in the book of Kings concerning Sennacherib. In the foregoing chapter we had him conquering and threatening to conquer. In this chapter we have him falling, and at last fallen, in answer to prayer, and in fulfillment of many of the prophecies which we have met with in the foregoing chapters.

Here we have,

- I. Hezekiah's virtuous reception of Rabshakeh's sinful discourse (v. 1).
- II. The gracious message he sent to Isaiah to desire his prayers (v. 2-5).
- III. The encouraging answer which Isaiah sent to him from God, assuring him that God would plead his cause against the king of Assyria (v. 6, 7).
- IV. An abusive letter which the king of Assyria sent to Hezekiah, to the same purport with Rabshakeh's speech (v. 8–13).
- V. Hezekiah's humble prayer to God upon the receipt of this letter (v. 14–20).
- VI. The further full answer which God sent him by Isaiah, promising him that his affairs should shortly take a happy turn, that the storm should blow over and every thing should appear bright and serene (v. 21–35).
- VII. The immediate accomplishment of this prophecy in the ruin of his army (v. 36) and the murder of himself (v. 37, 38). All this was largely opened, 2 Kings. 19.

CHAPTER 38

This chapter proceeds in the history of Hezekiah.

Here is:

- I. His sickness and the sentence of death he received within himself (v. 1).
- II. His prayer in his sickness (v. 2, 3).
- III. The answer of peace which God gave to that prayer, assuring him that he should recover, that he should live fifteen years yet, that Jerusalem should be delivered from the king of Assyria, and that, for a sign to confirm his faith herein, the sun should go back ten degrees (v. 4-8). And this we read and opened before, 2 King 20:1, etc. But,
- IV. Here is Hezekiah's thanksgiving for his recovery, which we had not before (v. 9–20). To which are added the means used (v. 21), and the end the good man aimed at in desiring to recover (v. 22). This is a chapter which will entertain the thoughts, direct the devotions, and encourage the faith and hopes of those that are confined by bodily distempers; it visits those that are visited with sickness.

CHAPTER 39

The story of this chapter likewise we had before, 2 Kings. 20:12, etc. It is here repeated, not only as a very memorable and improvable passage, but because it concludes with a prophecy of the captivity in Babylon; and as the former part of the prophecy of this book frequently referred to Sennacherib's invasion and the defeat of that, to which therefore the history of that was very fitly subjoined, so the latter part of this book speaks much of the Jews' captivity in Babylon and their deliverance out of that, to which therefore the first prediction of it, with the occasion thereof, is very fitly prefixed.

We have here:

- I. The pride and folly of Hezekiah, in showing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors that were sent to congratulate him on his recovery (v. 1, 2).
- II. Isaiah's examination of him concerning it, in God's name, and his confession of it (v. 3, 4).
- III. The sentence passed upon him for it, that all his treasures should, in process of time, will be carried to Babylon (v. 5-7).
- IV. Hezekiah's repenting and patient submission to this sentence (v. 8).

CHAPTER 40

At this chapter begins the latter part of the prophecy of this book, which is not only divided from the former by the historical chapters that come between, but seems to be distinguished from it in the scope and style of it. In the former part the name of the prophet was frequently prefixed to the particular sermons, besides the general title (as 2:1; 7:3; 13:1); but this is all one continued discourse, and the prophet not so much as once named.

That consisted of many burdens, many woes; this consists of many blessings. There the distress which the people of God were in by the Assyrian, and their deliverance out of that, were chiefly prophesied of; but that is here spoken of as a thing past (52:4); and the captivity in Babylon, and their deliverance out of that, which were much greater events, of more extensive and abiding concern, are here largely foretold.

Before God sent his people into captivity he furnished them with precious promises for their support and comfort in their trouble; and we may well imagine of what great use to them the glorious, gracious, light of this prophecy was, in that cloudy and dark day, and how much it helped to dry up their tears by the rivers of Babylon. But it looks further yet, and to greater things; much of Christ and gospel grace we meet with in the foregoing part of this book, but in this latter part we shall find much more; and, as if it were designed for a prophetic summary of the New Testament, it begins with that which begins the gospels, "*The voice of one crying in the wilderness*" (40:3), and concludes with that which concludes the book of the Revelation, "*The new heavens and the new earth,*" (66:22).

As all the mercies of God to the Jewish nation bore some resemblance to those glorious things performed by our Savior for man's redemption, so they are by the Spirit of God expressed in such terms as show plainly that while the prophet is speaking of the redemption of the Jews he had in his thoughts a more glorious deliverance. And we need not look for any further accomplishment of these prophecies yet to come; for if The Lord Jesus Christ be he, and his kingdom be it, that should come, we are to look for no other, but the carrying on and completing of the same blessed work which was begun in the first preaching and planting of Christianity in the world.

CHAPTER 41

This chapter, as the former, is intended both for the conviction of idolaters and for the consolation of all God's faithful worshippers; for the Spirit is sent, and ministers are employed by him, both to convince and to comfort.

However this might be primarily intended for the conviction of Babylonians, and the comfort of Israelites, or for the conviction of those in Israel that were addicted to idolatry, as multitudes were, and the comfort of those that kept their integrity, doubtless it was intended both for warning and encouragement to us, warning to keep ourselves from idols and encouragement to trust in God.

Here:

- I. God by the prophet shows the folly of those that worshipped idols, especially that thought their idols able to contest with him and control him (v. 1-9).
- II. He encourages his faithful ones to trust in him, with an assurance that he would take their part against their enemies, make them victorious over them, and bring about a happy change of their affairs (v. 10–20).
- III. He challenges the idols, which were rivals with him for men's worship, to compete with him either for knowledge or power, either to show things to come or to do good or evil (v. 21–29). So that the chapter may be summed up in those words of Elijah, "*If Jehovah be God, then follow him; but, if Baal be God, then follow him;*" and in the people's acknowledgment, upon the issue of the trial, "*Jehovah he is God, Jehovah he is God.*"

CHAPTER 42

The prophet seems here to launch out yet further into the prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom under the type of Cyrus. Having the great work of man's salvation by him yet more in view, he almost forgets the occasion that led him into it and drops the return out of Babylon. For indeed the prospect of this would be a greater comfort and support to the believing pious Jews, in their captivity, than the hope of that.

In this and similar prophecies of Christ, that are couched in types, as of David and Solomon, some passages agree to the type and not to the truth, other to the truth and not to the type, and many to the type in one sense and the truth in another.

Here is:

- I. A prophecy of the Messiah's coming with meekness, and yet with power, to do the Redeemer's work (v. 1-4).
- II. His commission opened, which he received from the Father (v. 5-9).
- III. The joy and rejoicing with which the glad tidings of this should be received (v. 10–12).
- IV. The wonderful success of the gospel, for the overthrow of the devil's kingdom (v. 13–17).
- V. The rejection and ruin of the Jews for their unbelief (v. 18–25).

CHAPTER 43

The contents of this chapter are much the same with those of the foregoing chapter, looking at the release of the Jews out of their captivity, but looking through that, and beyond that, to the great work of man's redemption by The Lord Jesus Christ, and the grace of the gospel, which through him believers partake of.

Here are:

- I. Precious promises made to God's people in their affliction, of his presence with them, for their support under it, and their deliverance out of it (v. 1-7).
- II. A challenge to idols to vie with God (v. 8–13).
- III. Encouragement given to the people of God to hope for their deliverance out of Babylon, from the consideration of what God did for their fathers when he brought them out of Egypt (v. 14–21).
- IV. A method taken to prepare the people for their deliverance, by putting them in mind of their sins, by which they had provoked God to send them into captivity and continue them there, that they might repent and seek to God for pardoning mercy (v. 22–28).

CHAPTER 44

God, by the prophet, goes on in this chapter, as before:

- I. To encourage his people with the assurance of great blessings he had in store for them at their return out of captivity, and those typical of much greater which the gospel church, his spiritual Israel, should partake of in the days of the Messiah; and hereby he proves himself to be God alone against all pretenders (v. 1-8).
- II. To expose the foolishness of idol-makers and idol-worshippers (v. 9–20).
- III. To confirm the assurances he had given to his people of those great blessings, and to raise their joyful and believing expectations of them (v. 21–28).

CHAPTER 45

Cyrus was nominated, in the foregoing chapter, to be God's shepherd; more is said to him and more of him in this chapter, not only because he was to be instrumental in the release of the Jews out of their captivity. But because he was to be therein a type of the great Redeemer, and that release was to be typical of the great redemption from sin and death; for that was the salvation of which all the prophets witnessed.

We have here:

- I. The great things which God would do for Cyrus, that he might be put into a capacity to release God's people (v. 1-4).
- II. The proof God would hereby give of his eternal power and godhead, and his universal, incontestable, sovereignty (v. 5-7).
- III. A prayer for the hastening of this deliverance (v. 8).
- IV. A check to the unbelieving Jews, who quarreled with God for the lengthening out of their captivity (v. 9, 10).
- V. Encouragement given to the believing Jews, who trusted in God and continued instant in prayer, assuring them that God would in due time accomplish this work by the hand of Cyrus (v. 11–15).
- VI. A challenge given to the worshippers of idols and their doom read, and satisfaction given to the worshippers of the true God and their comfort secured, with an eye to the Mediator, who is made of God to us both righteousness and sanctification (v. 16–25). And here, as in many other parts of this prophecy, there is much of Christ and of gospel grace.

CHAPTER 46

God, by the prophet here, designing shortly to deliver them out of their captivity, prepared them for that deliverance by possessing them with a hatred of idols and with a believing confidence in God, even their own God.

- I. Let them not be afraid of the idols of Babylon, as if they could in any way obstruct their deliverance, for they should be defaced (v. 1, 2). But let them trust in that God who had often delivered them to do it still, to do it now (v. 3, 4).
- II. Let them not think to make idols of their own, images of the God of Israel, by them to worship him, as the Babylonians worship their gods (v. 5-7). Let them not be so foolish (v. 8), but have an eye to God in his word, not in an image; let them depend upon that, and upon the promises and predictions of it, and God's power to accomplish them all (v. 9–11). And let them know that the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of no effect (v. 12, 13).

CHAPTER 47

Infinite Wisdom could have ordered things so that Israel might have been released and yet Babylon unhurt; but if they will harden their hearts, and will not let the people go, they must thank themselves that their ruin is made to pave the way to Israel's release.

That ruin is largely foretold, not to gratify a spirit of revenge in the people of God, who had been used barbarously by them, but to encourage their faith and hope concerning their own deliverance. And to be a type of the downfall of that great enemy of the New-Testament church which, in the Revelation, goes under the name of "Babylon."

In this chapter we have:

- I. The greatness of the ruin threatened, that Babylon should be brought down to the dust, and made completely miserable, should fall from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity (v. 1-5).
- II. The sins that provoked God to bring this ruin upon them. 1. Their cruelty to the people of God (v. 6). 2. Their pride and carnal security (v. 7-9). 3. Their confidence in themselves and contempt of God (v. 10). 4. Their use of magic arts and their dependence upon enchantments and sorceries, which should be so far from standing them in any stead that they should but hasten their ruin (v. 11-15).

CHAPTER 48

God, having in the foregoing chapter reckoned with the Babylonians, and shown them their sins and the desolation that was coming upon them for their sins, to show that he hates sin wherever he finds it and will not connive at it in his own people, comes, in this chapter, to show the house of Jacob their sins, but, on the other side, the mercy God had in store for them notwithstanding; and he therefore sets their sins in order before them, that by their repentance and reformation they might be prepared for that mercy.

- I. He charges them with hypocrisy in that which is good and stubbornness in that which is evil, especially in their idolatry, notwithstanding the many convincing proofs God had given them that he is God alone, (v. 1-8).
- II. He assures them that their deliverance would be wrought purely for the sake of God's own name and not for any merit of theirs (v. 9-11).
- III. He encourages them to depend purely upon God's power and promise for this deliverance (v. 12-15).
- IV. He shows them that, as it was by their own sin that they brought themselves into captivity, so it would be only by the grace of God that they would obtain the necessary preparative for their enlargement (v. 16-19).
- V. He proclaims their release, yet with a condition that the wicked shall have no benefit by it (v. 20-22).

CHAPTER 49

Glorious things had been spoken in the previous chapters concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon; but lest any should think, when it was accomplished, that it looked much greater and brighter in the prophecy than in the performance, and that the return of about 40,000 Jews in a poor condition out of Babylon to Jerusalem was not an event sufficiently answering to the height and grandeur of the expressions used in the prophecy, he here comes to show that the prophecy had a further intention, and was to have its full accomplishment in a redemption that should as far outdo these expressions as the other seemed to come short of them, even the redemption of the world by The Lord Jesus Christ, of whom not only Cyrus, who was God's servant in foretelling it, was a type.

In this chapter we have:

- I. The designation of Christ, under the type of Isaiah, to his office as Mediator (v. 1-3).
- II. The assurance given him of the success of his undertaking among the Gentiles (v. 4-8).

- III. The redemption that should be wrought by him, and the progress of that redemption (v. 9–12).
- IV. The encouragement given hence to the afflicted church (v. 13–17).
- V. The addition of many to it, and the setting up of a church among the Gentiles (v. 18–23).
- VI. A ratification of the prophecy of the Jews' release out of Babylon, which was to be the figure and type of all these blessings, (v. 24–26). If this chapter be rightly understood, we shall see ourselves to be more concerned in the prophecies relating to the Jews' deliverance out of Babylon than we thought we were.

CHAPTER 50

In this chapter

- I. Those to whom God sends are justly charged with bringing all the troubles they were in upon themselves, by their own willfulness and determination, it being made to appear that God was able and ready to help them if they had been fit for deliverance (v. 1-3).
- II. He by whom God sends produces his commission (v. 4), alleges his own readiness to submit to all the services and sufferings he was called to in the execution of it (v. 5, 6), and assures himself that God, who sent him, would stand by him and bear him out against all opposition (v. 7-9).
- III. The message that is sent is life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, comfort to dejected righteous and terror to presuming sinners (v. 10, 11). Now all this seems to have a double reference
 - ❖ To the unbelieving Jews in Babylon, who quarreled with God for his dealings with them, and to the prophet Isaiah, who, though dead long before the captivity, yet, prophesying so plainly and fully of it, saw fit to produce his credentials, to justify what he had said.
 - ❖ To the unbelieving Jews in our Savior's time, whose own fault it was that they rejected, Christ having preached much to them, and suffered much from them, and being herein borne up by a divine power. The "contents" of this chapter, in our Bibles, give this sense of it, very concisely, thus: "Christ shows that the negligence of the Jews is not to be imputed to him, by his ability to save, by his obedience in that work, and by his confidence in divine assistance." The prophet concludes with an exhortation to trust in God and not in ourselves.

CHAPTER 51

This chapter is designed for the comfort and encouragement of those that fear God and keep his commandments, even when they walk in darkness and have no light. Whether it was intended primarily for the support of the captives in Babylon is not certain, probably it was; but comforts thus generally expressed ought not to be so confined.

Whenever the church of God is in distress her friend and well wishers may comfort themselves and one another with these words,

- I. That God, who raised his church at first out of nothing, will take care that it shall not perish (v. 1-3).
- II. That the righteousness and salvation he designs for his church are sure and near, very near and very sure (v. 4-6).
- III. That the persecutors of the church are weak and dying creatures (v. 7, 8).
- IV. That the same power, which did wonders for the church formerly, is now engaged and employed for her protection and deliverance (v. 9–11).

- V. That God himself, the Maker of the world, had undertaken both to deliver his people out of their distress and to comfort them under it, and sent his prophet to assure them of it (v. 12–16).
- VI. That, deplorable as the condition of the church now was (v. 17–20), to the same woeful circumstances her persecutors and oppressors should shortly be reduced, and worse (v. 21–23). The first three paragraphs of this chapter begin with, "Hearken unto me," and they are God's people that are all along called to hearken; for even when comforts are spoken to them sometimes they "hearken not, through anguish of spirit" (Exodus. 6:9). Therefore they are again and again called to hearken (v. 1, 4, 7). The two other paragraphs of this chapter begin with "*Awake, awake;*" in the former (v. 9) God's people call upon him to awake and help them; in the latter (v. 17) God calls upon them to awake and help themselves.

CHAPTER 52

The greater part of this chapter is on the same subject with the chapter before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, which yet is applicable to the great salvation Christ has wrought out for us; but the last three verses are on the same subject with the following chapter, concerning the person of the Redeemer, his humiliation and exaltation.

Observe

- I. The encouragement that is given to the Jews in captivity to hope that God would deliver them in his own way and time (v. 1-6).
- II. The great joy and rejoicing that shall be both with ministers and people upon that occasion (v. 7–10).
- III. The call given to those that remained in captivity to shift for their own enlargement when liberty was proclaimed (v. 11, 12).
- IV. A short idea given here of the Messiah, which is enlarged upon in the next chapter (v. 13–15).

CHAPTER 53

The two great things which the Spirit of Christ in the Old-Testament prophets testified beforehand were the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, 1 Pt. 1:11. And that which Christ himself, when he talked about Moses and all the prophets, showed to be the drift and scope of them all was that Christ ought to suffer and then to enter into his glory, (Luke 24:26,27). But nowhere in all the Old Testament are these two so plainly and fully prophesied of as here in this chapter, out of which divers passages are quoted with application to Christ in the New Testament. This chapter is so replenished with the unreachable richness of Christ that it may be called rather the gospel of the evangelist Isaiah than the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah.

We may observe here,

- I. The bitterness of Christ's sufferings—the shamefulness of his appearance, the greatness of his grief, and the prejudices which many conceived in consequences against his doctrine (v. 1-3).
- II. The rolling away of this reproach, and the stamping of immortal honor upon his sufferings, notwithstanding the disgrace and humiliation of them, by four considerations:
 - ❖ That therein he did his Father's will (v. 4, 6, 10).
 - ❖ That thereby he made atonement for the sin of man (v. 4–6, 8, 11, 12), for it was not for any sin of his own that he suffered (v. 9).
 - ❖ That he bore his sufferings with an invincible and exemplary patience (v. 7).

- ❖ That he should prosper in his undertaking, and his sufferings should end in his immortal honor (v. 10–12). By mixing faith with the prophecy of this chapter we may improve our acquaintance with The Lord Jesus Christ and him crucified, with The Lord Jesus Christ and him glorified, dying for our sins and rising again for our justification.

CHAPTER 54

The death of Christ is the life of the church and of all that truly belong to it; and therefore very fitly, after the prophet had foretold the sufferings of Christ, he foretells the flourishing of the church, which is a part of his glory, and that exaltation of him which was the reward of his humiliation: it was promised him that he should see his seed, and this chapter is an explication of that promise. It may easily be granted that it has a primary reference to the welfare and prosperity of the Jewish church after their return out of Babylon, which (as other things that happened to them) was typical of the glorious liberty of the children of God, which through Christ we are brought into; yet it cannot be denied but that it has a further and principal reference to the gospel church, into which the Gentiles were to be admitted. And the first words being understood by the apostle Paul of the New-Testament Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26) may serve as a key to the whole chapter and that which follows.

It is here promised concerning the Christian church:

- I. That, though the beginnings of it were small, it should be greatly enlarged by the accession of many to it among the Gentiles, who had been wholly destitute of church privileges (v. 1-5).
- II. That though sometimes God might seem to withdraw from her, and suspend the tokens of his favor, he would return in mercy and would not return to contend with them any more (v. 6–10).
- III. That, though for a while she was in sorrow and under oppression, she should at length be advanced to greater honor and splendor than ever (v. 11, 12).
- IV. That knowledge, righteousness, and peace, should flourish and prevail (v. 13, 14).
- V. That all attempts against the church should be baffled, and she should be secured from the malice of her enemies (v. 14–17).

CHAPTER 55

As we had much of Christ in the 53rd chapter, and much of the church of Christ in the 54th chapter, so in this chapter we have much of the covenant of grace made with us in Christ. The "sure mercies of David," which are promised here (v. 3), are applied by the apostle to the benefits which flow to us from the resurrection of Christ (Acts 13:34), which may serve as a key to this chapter; not but that it was intended for the comfort of the people of God that lived then, especially of the captives in Babylon, and others of the dispersed of Israel; but unto us was this gospel preached as well as unto them, and much more clearly and fully in the New Testament.

Here is:

- I. A free and gracious invitation to all to come and take the benefit of gospel grace (v. 1).
- II. Pressing arguments to enforce this invitation (v. 2-4).
- III. A promise of the success of this invitation among the Gentiles (v. 5).
- IV. An exhortation to repentance and reformation, with great encouragement given to hope for pardon thereupon (v. 6-9).
- V. The ratification of all this, with the certain effectiveness of the word of God (v. 10, 11). And a particular instance of the accomplishment of it in the return of the Jews out of

their captivity, which was intended for a sign of the accomplishment of all these other promises.

CHAPTER 56

After the exceedingly great and precious promises of gospel grace, typified by temporal deliverance, which we had in the foregoing chapter, we have here,

- I. A solemn charge given to us all to make conscience of our duty, as we hope to have the benefit of those promises (v. 1, 2).
- II. Great encouragement given to strangers that were willing to come under the bonds of the covenant, assuring them of the blessings of the covenant (v. 3-8).
- III. A high charge drawn up against the watchmen of Israel, that were careless and unfaithful in the discharge of their duty (v. 9–12), which seems to be the beginning of a new sermon, by way of reproof and threatening, which is continued in the following chapters. And the word of God was intended for conviction, as well as for comfort and instruction in righteousness.

CHAPTER 57

The prophet, in this chapter, makes his observations:

- I. Upon the deaths of good men, comforting those that were taken away in their integrity and reproving those that did not make a due improvement of such providence (v. 1, 2).
- II. Upon the gross idolatries and spiritual whoredoms which the Jews were guilty of, and the destroying judgments they were thereby bringing upon themselves (v. 3–12).
- III. Upon the gracious returns of God to his people to put an end to their captivity and re-establish their prosperity (v. 13–21).

CHAPTER 58

The prophet, in this chapter, has his commission and charge renewed to reprove the sinners in Zion, particularly the hypocrites, to show them their transgression (v. 1). It is intended for admonition and warning to all hypocrites, and is not to be confined to those of any one age. Some refer it primarily to those at that time when Isaiah prophesied; see 33:14; 29:13. Others to the captives in Babylon, the wicked among them, to whom the prophet had declared there was no peace 57:21. Against the terror of that word they thought to shelter themselves with their external performances, particularly their fasting, which they kept up in Babylon, and for some time after their return to their own land. (Zechariah. 7:3)

The prophet therefore here shows them that their devotions would not entitle them to peace while their conversations were not at all of a piece with them. Others think it is principally intended against the hypocrisy of the Jews, especially the Pharisees before and in our Savior's time: they boasted of their fasting, but Christ (as a king here) showed them their transgressions (Mt. 23), much the same with those they are here charged with.

Observe:

- I. The plausible profession of religion which they made (v. 2).
- II. The boasts they made of that profession, and the blame they laid upon God for taking no more notice of it (v. 3).
- III. The sins they are charged with, which spoiled the acceptableness of their fasts (v. 4, 5).
- IV. Instructions given them how to keep fasts aright (v. 6, 7).
- V. Precious promises made to those who do so keep fasts (v. 8–12).
- VI. The like precious promises made to those that sanctify Sabbaths aright (v. 13, 14).

CHAPTER 59

In this chapter we have sin appearing exceedingly sinful, and grace appearing exceedingly gracious; and, as what is here said of the sinner's sin (v. 7, 8) is applied to the general corruption of mankind (Romans 3:15), so what is here said of a Redeemer (v. 20) is applied to Christ (Romans 11:26).

- I. It is here charged upon this people that they had themselves stopped the current of God's favors to them, and the particular sins are specified which kept good things from them (v. 1-8).
- II. It is here charged upon them that they had themselves obtained the judgments of God upon them, and they are told both what the judgments were which they had brought upon their own heads (v. 9-11) and what the sins were which provoked God to send those judgments (v. 12-15).
- III. It is here promised that, notwithstanding this, God would work deliverance for them, purely for his own name's sake (v. 16-19), and would reserve mercy in store for them and entail it upon them (v. 20, 21).

CHAPTER 60

This whole chapter is all to the same purport, all in the same strain; it is a part of God's covenant with his church, which is spoken of in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, and the blessings here promised are the fruits of the word and Spirit there promised. The long continuance of the church, even unto the utmost ages of time, was there promised, and here the large extent of the church, even unto the utmost regions of the earth; and both these tend to the honor of the Redeemer.

It is here promised:

- I. That the church shall be enlightened and shone upon (v. 1, 2).
- II. That it shall be enlarged and great additions made to it, to join in the service of God (v. 3-8).
- III. That the new converts shall be greatly serviceable to the church and to the interests of it (v. 9-13).
- IV. That the church shall be in great honor and reputation among men (v. 14-16).
- V. That it shall enjoy a profound peace and tranquility (v. 17, 18).
- VI. That, the members of it being all righteous, the glory and joy of it shall be everlasting (v. 19-22). Now this has some reference to the peaceable and prosperous condition which the Jews were sometimes in after their return out of captivity into their own land; but it certainly looks further, and was to have its full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, the enlargement of that kingdom by the bringing in of the Gentiles into it, and the spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ Jesus with which it should be enriched, and all these earnest of eternal joy and glory.

CHAPTER 61

In this chapter:

- I. We are sure to find the grace of Christ, published by himself to a lost world in the everlasting gospel, under the type and figure of Isaiah's province, which was to foretell the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon (v. 1-3).
- II. We think we find the glories of the church of Christ, its spiritual glories, described under the type and figure of the Jews' prosperity after their return out of their captivity
 - ❖ It is promised that the decays of the church shall be repaired (v. 4).
 - ❖ That those from without shall be made serviceable to the church (v. 5).
 - ❖ That the church shall be a royal priesthood, maintained by the riches of the Gentiles (v. 6).

- ❖ That she shall have honor and joy in lieu of all her shame and sorrow (v. 7).
- ❖ That her affairs shall prosper (v. 8).
- ❖ That prosperity shall enjoy these blessings (v. 9).
- ❖ That righteousness and salvation shall be the eternal matter of the church's rejoicing and thanksgiving (v. 10, 11). If the Jewish church was ever thus blessed, much more shall the Christian church be so, and all that belong to it.

CHAPTER 62

The business of prophets was both to preach and pray.

In this chapter:

- I. The prophet determines to apply closely and constantly to this business (v. 1).
- II. God appoints him and others of his prophets to continue to do so, for the encouragement of his people during the delays of their deliverance (v. 6, 7).
- III. The promises are here repeated and ratified of the great things God would do for his church, for the Jews after their return out of captivity and for the Christian church when it shall be set up in the world.
 - ❖ The church shall be made honorable in the eyes of the world (v. 2).
 - ❖ It shall appear to be very dear to God, precious and honorable in his sight (v. 3-5).
 - ❖ It shall enjoy great plenty (v. 8, 9).
 - ❖ It shall be released out of captivity and grow up again into a considerable nation, particularly owned and favored by heaven (v. 10–12).

CHAPTER 63

In this chapter we have:

- I. God coming towards his people in ways of mercy and deliverance, and this is to be joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, where it was said to Zion, "Behold, thy salvation comes;" for here it is shown how it comes (v. 1-6).
- II. God's people meeting him with their devotions, and addressing themselves to him with suitable affections; and this part of the chapter is carried on to the close of the next. In this we have:
 - ❖ A thankful acknowledgment of the great favors God had bestowed upon them (v. 7).
 - ❖ The magnifying of these favors, from the consideration of God's relation to them (v. 8), his compassionate concern for them (v. 9), their unworthiness (v. 10), and the occasion which it gave both him and them to call to mind former mercies (v. 11–14).
 - ❖ A very humble and earnest prayer to God to appear for them in their present distress, pleading God's mercy (v. 15), their relation to him (v. 16), their desire towards him (v. 17), and the insolence of their enemies (v. 18, 19). So that, upon the whole, we learn to embrace God's promises with an active faith, and then to improve them, and make use of them, both in prayers and praises.

CHAPTER 64

This chapter goes on with that pathetic pleading prayer which the church offered up to God in the latter part of the foregoing chapter. They had argued from their covenant-relation to God and his interest and concern in them.

Now here:

- I. They pray that God would appear in some remarkable and surprising manner for them against his and their enemies (v. 1, 2).
- II. They plead what God had formerly done, and was always ready to do, for his people (v. 3-5).

- III. They confess themselves to be sinful and unworthy of God's favor, and that they had deserved the judgments they were now under (v. 6, 7).
- IV. They refer themselves to the mercy of God as a Father, and submit themselves to his sovereignty (v. 8).
- V. They represent the very deplorable condition they were in, and earnestly pray for the pardon of sin and the turning away of God's anger (v. 9–12). And this was not only intended for the use of the captive Jews, but may serve for direction to the church in other times of distress, what to ask of God and how to plead with him. Are God's people at any time in affliction, in great affliction? Let them pray, let them thus pray.

CHAPTER 65

We are now drawing towards the conclusion of this evangelical prophecy, the last two chapters of which direct us to look as far forward as the new heavens and the new earth, the new world which the gospel should bring in, and the separation that should by it be made between the precious and the vile.

"For judgment," says the Lord Jesus Christ, *"have I come into this world."* And why should it seem absurd that the prophet here should speak of that to which all the prophets bore witness? (1 Peter. 1:10, 11). The rejection of the Jews, and the calling in of the Gentiles, are often mentioned in the New Testament as that which was foreseen and foretold by the prophets - Acts 10:43 and 13:40; Romans 16:26.

In this chapter we have:

- I. The anticipating of the Gentiles with the gospel call (v. 10).
- II. The rejection of the Jews for their obstinacy and unbelief (v. 2-7).
- III. The saving of a remnant of them by bringing them into the gospel church (v. 8–10).
- IV. The judgments of God that should pursue the rejected Jews (v. 11–16).
- V. The blessings reserved for the Christian church, which should be its joy and glory (v. 17–25). But these things are here prophesied of under the type and figure of the difference God would make between some and others of the Jews after their return out of captivity, between those that feared God and those that did not, with reproofs of the sins then found among them and promises of the blessings then in reserve for them.

CHAPTER 66

The scope of this chapter is much the same as that of the foregoing chapter and many expressions of it are the same; it therefore looks the same way, to the different state of the good and bad among the Jews at their return out of captivity, but that typifying the rejection of the Jews in the days of the Messiah, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom in the world.

The first verse of this chapter is applied to the dismantling of the temple by the planting of the Christian church (Acts 7:49, 50), which may serve as a key to the whole chapter.

We have here:

- I. The contempt God puts upon ceremonial services in comparison with moral duties, and an intimation therein of his purpose shortly to put an end to the temple, and sacrifice and reject those that adhered to them (v. 1-4).
- II. The salvation God will in due time work for his people out of the hands of their oppressors (v. 5), speaking terror to the persecutors (v. 6) and comfort to the persecuted, a speedy and complete deliverance (v. 7-9), a joyful settlement (v. 10, 11), the accession of the Gentiles to them, and abundance of satisfaction therein (v. 12–14).

- III. The terrible vengeance which God will bring upon the enemies of his church and people (v. 15–18).
- IV. The happy establishment of the church upon large and sure foundations, its constant attendance on God and triumph over its enemies (v. 19–24). And we may well expect that this evangelical prophet, here, in the close of his prophecy, should (as he does) look as far forward as to the last day, to the days of eternity.

Lecture 2: The Holy Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

Introduction:

The Prophecies of the Old Testament, as the Epistles of the New, are placed rather according to their bulk than their seniority—the longest first, not the oldest. There were several prophets, and writing ones, that were contemporaries with Isaiah, as Micah, or a little before him, as Hosea, and Joel, and Amos, or soon after him, as Habakkuk and Nahum are supposed to have been; and yet the prophecy of Jeremiah, who began many years after Isaiah finished, is placed next to his, because there is so much in it.

Where we meet with most of God's word, there let the preference be given; and yet those of fewer gifts are not to be despised nor excluded. Nothing now occurs to be observed further concerning prophecy in general; but concerning this prophet Jeremiah we may observe:

- I. That he began young, and therefore could say, from his own experience, that it is good for a man to *bear the yoke in his youth*, the yoke both of service and of affliction, Lam. 3:27. St. Jerome observes that Isaiah, who had more years over his head, had his tongue touched with a coal of fire, to purge away his iniquity (6:7), but that when God touched Jeremiah's mouth, who was yet but young, nothing was said of the purging of his iniquity (1:9), because, by reason of his tender years, he had not so much sin to answer for.
- II. That he continued long a prophet, some reckon fifty years, others above forty. He began in the thirteenth year of Josiah, when things went well under that good king, but he continued through all the wicked reigns that followed; for when we set out for the service of God, though the wind may then be fair and favorable, we know not how soon it may turn and be tempestuous.
- III. That he was a reproving prophet, was sent in God's name to tell Jacob of their sins and to warn them of the judgments of God that were coming upon them; and the critics observe that therefore his style or manner of speaking is more plain and rough, and less polite, than that of Isaiah and some others of the prophets. Those that are sent to discover sin ought to lay aside the enticing words of man's wisdom. Plain dealing is best when we are dealing with sinners to bring them to repentance.
- IV. That he was a weeping prophet; so he is commonly called, not only because he penned the Lamentations, but because he was all along a mournful observer of the sins of his people and of the desolating judgments that were coming upon them. And for this reason, perhaps, those who imagined our Savior to be one of the prophets thought him of any of them to be most like to Jeremiah (Matthew 16:14), because he was *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*.
- V. That he was a suffering prophet. He was persecuted by his own people more than any of them, as we shall find in the story of this book; for he lived and preached just before the Jews' destruction by the Chaldeans, when their character seems to have been the same as it was just before their destruction by the Romans. When they *killed the Lord Jesus Christ, and persecuted his disciples, pleased not God, and were contrary to all men, for wrath had come upon them to the uttermost*" (1 Th. 2:15,16). The last account we have of him in his history is that the remaining Jews forced him to go down with them into Egypt; whereas the current tradition is, among Jews and Christians, that he suffered martyrdom. Hottinger, out of Elmakin, an Arabic historian, relates that, continuing to prophesy in Egypt against the Egyptians and other nations, he was stoned to death; and that long after, when Alexander entered Egypt, he took up the bones of

Jeremiah where they were buried in obscurity. Carried them to Alexandria, and buried them there.

The prophecies of this book which we have in the first nineteen chapters seem to be the heads of the sermons he preached in a way of general reproof for sin and denunciation of judgment. Afterwards they are more particular and occasional, and mixed with the history of his day, but not placed in due order of time. With the threats are intermixed many gracious promises of mercy to the repentant, of the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity, and some that have a plain reference to the kingdom of the Messiah. Among the second canonical books an epistle said to be written by Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon, warning them against the worship of idols, by exposing the vanity of idols and the folly of idolaters.

It is in Baruch, chapter 6. It is also related concerning Jeremiah (2 Mac. 2:4) that, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans, he, by direction from God, took the ark and the altar of incense, and, carrying them to Mount Nebo lodged them in a hollow cave there and stopped the door. But some that followed him, and thought that they had marked the place, could not find it. He blamed them for seeking it, telling them that the place should be unknown till the time that God should gather his people together again. We cannot but be concerned, in the reading of Jeremiah's prophecies, to find that they were so little regarded by the men of that generation; but let us make use of that as a reason why we should regard them.

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter we have:

- I. The general inscription or title of this book, with the time of the continuance of Jeremiah's public ministry (v. 1-3).
- II. The call of Jeremiah to the prophetic office, his modest objection against it answered, and an ample commission given him for the execution of it (v. 4-10).
- III. The visions of an almond-rod and a seething-pot, signifying the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans (v. 11-16).
- IV. Encouragement given to the prophet to go on undauntedly in his work, in an assurance of God's presence with him (v. 17-19). Thus is he set to work by one that will be sure to bear him out.

CHAPTER 2

It is probable that this chapter was Jeremiah's first sermon after his ordination; and a most lively heartbreaking sermon it is as any we have in all the books of the prophets. Let him not say, "*I cannot speak, for I am a child;*" for, God having touched his mouth and put his words into it, none can speak better.

The scope of the chapter is to show God's people their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins; it is all by way of reproof and conviction, which they might be brought to repent of their sins and so prevent the ruin that was coming upon them. The charge drawn up against them is very high, the aggravations are black, the arguments used for their conviction very close and pressing, and the expostulations very pungent and affecting.

The sin which they are most particularly charged with here is idolatry, forsaking the true God, their own God, for other false gods. Now they are told,

- I. That this was ungrateful to God, who had been so kind to them (v. 1-8).

- II. That it was uncommon, that a nation should change their god (v. 9–13).
- III. That hereby they had belittled and ruined themselves (v. 14–19).
- IV. That they had broken their covenants and degenerated from their good beginnings (v. 20, 21).
- V. That their wickedness was too plain to be covered and too bad to be excused (v. 22, 23, and 35).
- VI. That they persisted totally and determinedly in it, and were unrecoverable and untiring in their idolatries (v. 24, 25, 33, and 36).
- VII. That they shamed themselves by their idolatry and should shortly be made ashamed of it when they should find their idols unable to help them (v. 26–29, 37).
- VIII. That they had not been convinced and reformed by the rebukes of Providence that had been under (v. 30).
- IX. That they had put a great contempt upon God (v. 31, 32).
- X. That with their idolatries they had mixed the most unnatural murders, shedding the blood of the poor innocents' (v. 34). Those hearts were hard indeed that were untouched and not humbled when their sins were thus set in order before them. O that by meditating on this chapter we might be brought to repent of our spiritual idolatries, giving that place in our souls to the world and the flesh which should have been reserved for God only!

CHAPTER 3

The foregoing chapter was wholly taken up with reproofs and threats against the people of God for abandoning Him. But in this chapter gracious invitations and encouragement are given them to return and repent, notwithstanding the multitude and greatness of their provocations, which are here specified, to magnify the mercy of God, and to show that as sin abounded grace did much more abound.

Here:

- I. It is further shown how bad they had been and how well they deserved to be quite abandoned, and yet how ready God was to receive them into his favor upon their repentance (v. 1-5)
- II. The unrepentant Judah, and their persisting in sin, are aggravated from the judgments of God upon Israel, which they should have taken warning by (v. 6–11).
- III. Great encouragement are given to these backsliders to return and repent, and promises made of great mercy which God had in store for them, and which he would prepare them for by bringing them home to himself (v. 12–19).
- IV. The charge renewed against them for abandoning God, and the invitation repeated to return and repent, to which are here added the words that are put in their mouth, which they should make use of in their return to God (v. 20–25).

CHAPTER 4

It should seem that the first two verses of this chapter might better have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, for they are directed to Israel, the ten tribes, by way of reply to their compliance with God's call, directing and encouraging them to hold their resolution (v. 1, 2).

The rest of the chapter concerns Judah and Jerusalem.

- I. They are called to repent and reform (v. 3, 4).

- II. They are warned of the advance of Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against them, and are told that it is for their sins, from which they are again exhorted to wash themselves (v. 5–18).
- III. To affect them the more with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, the prophet does himself bitterly lament it, and sympathize with his people in the tragedy it brought upon them, and the fall it brought them to, representing it as a reduction of the world to its first chaos (v. 19–31).

CHAPTER 5

Reproof for sin and threats of judgment are intermixed in this chapter, and are set the one over against the other: judgments are threatened, that the reproofs of sin might be the more effectual to bring them to repentance; sin is discovered, that God might be justified in the judgments threatened.

- I. The sins they are charged with are very great: Injustice (v. 1), hypocrisy in religion (v. 2), incorrigible (v. 3), the corruption and wickedness of both poor and rich (v. 4, 5), idolatry and adultery (v. 7, 8), unfaithful departures from God (v. 11), and insolent disobedience of him (v. 12, 13), and, that which is at the bottom of all this, want of the fear of God, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to fear him (v. 20–24). In the close of the chapter they are charged with violence and oppression (v. 26–28), and a combination of those to ruin the nation who should have been active to reform it (v. 30, 31).
- II. The judgments they are threatened with are very terrible. In general, they shall be reckoned with (v. 9, 29). A foreign enemy shall be brought in upon them (v. 15–17), shall set guards upon them (v. 6), shall destroy their strength (v. 10), shall carry them away into captivity (v. 19), and keep all good things from them (v. 25). Herein the words of God's prophets shall be fulfilled (v. 14). But...
- III. Here is an indication twice given that God would in the midst of wrath remember mercy, and not utterly destroy them (v. 10, 18). This was the scope and purpose of Jeremiah's preaching in the latter end of Josiah's reign and the beginning of Jehoiakim's; but the success of it did not answer expectation.

CHAPTER 6

In this chapter, as before, we have:

- I. A prophecy of the invading of the land of Judah and the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army (v. 1-6), with the spoils they should make of the country (v. 9) and the terror which all should be seized with on that occasion (v. 22–26).
- II. An account of those sins of Judah and Jerusalem which provoked God to bring this desolating judgment upon them. Their oppression (v. 7), their contempt of the word of God (v. 10–12), their worldliness (v. 13), the deceit of their prophets (v. 14), their impudence in sin (v. 15), their obstinacy against reproofs (v. 18, 19), which made their sacrifices unacceptable to him (v. 20), and for which he gave them up to ruin (v. 21), but tried them first (v. 27) and then rejected them as irreclaimable (v. 28–30).
- III. Good counsel given them in the midst of all this, but in vain (v. 8, 16, and 17).

CHAPTER 7

The prophet having in God's name reproved the people for their sins, and given them warning of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, in this chapter prosecutes the same intention for their humiliation and awakening.

- I. He shows them the invalidity of the plea they so much relied on, that they had the temple of God among them and constantly attended the service of it, and actions to

- take them off from their confidence in their external privileges and performances (v. 1–11).
- II. He reminds them of the desolation of Shiloh, and foretells that such should be the desolation of Jerusalem (v. 12–16).
 - III. He represents to the prophet their abominable idolatries, for which he was thus incensed against them (v. 17–20).
 - IV. He sets before the people that fundamental maxim of religion that *"to obey is better than sacrifice"* (1 Samuel 15:22), and that God would not accept the sacrifices of those that stubbornly persisted in disobedience (v. 21–28).
 - V. He threatens to lay the land utterly waste for their idolatry and impiety, and to multiply their slain as they had multiplied their sin (v. 29–34).

CHAPTER 8

The prophet proceeds, in this chapter, both to magnify and to justify the destruction that God was bringing upon this people, to show how grievous it would be and yet how righteous.

- I. He represents the judgments coming as so very terrible that death should appear so as most to be dreaded and yet should be desired (v. 1-3)
- II. He aggravates the wretched stupidity and willfulness of this people as that which brought this ruin upon them (v. 4–12).
- III. He describes the great confusion and consternation that the whole land should be in upon the alarm of it (v. 13–17).
- IV. The prophet is himself deeply affected with it and lays it very much to heart (v. 18–22).

CHAPTER 9

In this chapter the prophet goes on faithfully to reprove sin and to threaten God's judgments for it, and yet bitterly to lament both, as one that neither rejoiced at iniquity nor was glad at calamities.

- I. He here expresses his great grief for the miseries of Judah and Jerusalem, and his hatred of their sins, which brought those miseries upon them (v. 1–11).
- II. He justifies God in the greatness of the destruction brought upon them (v. 9–16).
- III. He calls upon others to bewail the woeful case of Judah and Jerusalem (v. 17–22).
- IV. He shows them the folly and vanity of trusting in their own strength or wisdom, or the privileges of their circumcision, or any thing but God only (v. 23–26).

CHAPTER 10

We may presume that the prophecy of this chapter was delivered after the first captivity, in the time of Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, when many were carried away to Babylon; for it has a double reference:

- I. To those that were carried away into the land of the Chaldeans, a country disreputable above any other for idolatry and superstition; and they are here cautioned against the infection of the place, not to learn the way of the heathen (v. 1, 2), for their astrology and idolatry are both foolish things (v. 3-5), and the worshippers of idols (v. 8, 9). So it will appear in the day of their visitation (v. 14, 15). They are likewise exhorted to adhere firmly to the God of Israel, for there is none like him (v. 6, 7). He is the true God, lives forever, and has the government of the world (v. 10–13), and his people are happy in him (v. 16).
- II. To those that yet remained in their own land. They are cautioned against security, and told to expect distress (v. 17, 18) and that by a foreign enemy, which God would bring

upon them for their sin (v. 20–22). This calamity the prophet laments (v. 19) and prays for the lessening of it (v. 23–25).

CHAPTER 11

In this chapter:

- I. God by the prophet puts the people in mind of the covenant he had made with their fathers, and how much he had insisted upon it, as the condition of the covenant, that they should be obedient to him (v. 1-7).
- II. He charges it upon them that they, in succession to their fathers, and in confederacy among themselves, had obstinately refused to obey him (v. 8–10).
- III. He threatens to punish them with utter ruin for their disobedience, especially for their idolatry (v. 11, 13), and tells them that their idols should not save them (v. 12), that their prophets should not pray for them (v. 14); he also justifies his proceedings herein, they having brought all this mischief upon themselves by their own folly and willfulness (v. 15–17).
- IV. Here is an account of a conspiracy formed against Jeremiah by his fellow-citizens, the men of Anathoth; God's discovery of it to him (v. 18, 19), his prayer against them (v. 20), and a prediction of God's judgments upon them for it (v. 21–23).

CHAPTER 12

In this chapter we have:

- I. The prophet's humble complaint to God of the success that wicked people had in their wicked practices (v. 1, 2) and his appeal to God concerning his own integrity (v. 3), with a prayer that God would, for the sake of the public, bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end (v. 3, 4).
- II. God's rebuke to the prophet for his uneasiness at his present troubles, bidding him prepare for greater (v. 5, 6).
- III. A sad lamentation of the present deplorable state of the Israel of God (v. 7–13).
- IV. An indication of mercy to God's people, in a condemnation of wrath against their neighbors that helped forward their affliction, that they should be plucked out; but with a promise that if they would at last join themselves with the people of God they should come in sharers with them in their privileges (v. 14–17).

CHAPTER 13

Still the prophet is attempting to awaken this secure and stubborn people to repentance, by the consideration of the judgments of God that were coming upon them. He is to tell them

- I. By the sign of a girdle spoiled that their pride should be stained (v. 1–11).
- II. By the sign of bottles filled with wine that their counsels should be blasted (v. 12–14).
- III. In consideration hereof he is to call them to repent and humble themselves (v. 15–21).
- IV. He is to convince them that it is for their stubbornness and unyieldingness that the judgments of God are so prolonged and brought to extremity (v. 22–27).

CHAPTER 14

This chapter was penned upon occasion of a great drought, for want of rain. This judgment began in the latter end of Josiah's reign, but, as it should seem, continued in the beginning of Jehoiakim's: for less judgments are sent to give warning of greater coming, if not prevented by repentance. This calamity was mentioned several times before, but here, in this chapter, more fully.

Here is:

- I. A sad description of it (v. 1-6).

- II. A prayer to God to put an end to this catastrophe and to return in mercy to their land (v. 7-9).
- III. A severe threatening that God would precede in his controversy, because they proceeded in their iniquity (v. 10-12).
- IV. The prophet's excusing the people, by laying the blame on their false prophets; and the doom passed both on the deceivers and the deceived (v. 13-16).
- V. Directions given to the prophet, instead of interceding for them, to lament them; but his continuing notwithstanding to intercede for them (v. 17-22).

CHAPTER 15

When we left the prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, so pitifully pouring out his prayers before God, we had reason to hope that in this chapter we should find God reconciled to the land and the prophet brought into a quiet composed frame; but, to our great surprise, we find it much otherwise as to both.

- I. Notwithstanding the prophet's prayers, God here ratifies the sentence given against the people, and abandons them to ruin turning a deaf ear to all the intercessions made for them (v. 1-9).
- II. The prophet himself, notwithstanding the satisfaction he had in communion with God, still finds himself uneasy and out of temper.
 - ❖ He complains to God of his continual struggle with his persecutor (v. 10).
 - ❖ God assures him that he shall be taken under special protection, though there was a general desolation coming upon the land (v. 11-14).
 - ❖ He appeals to God concerning his sincerity in the discharge of his prophetic office and thinks it hard that he should not have more of the comfort of it (v. 15-18).
 - ❖ Fresh security is given him that, upon condition he continue faithful, God will continue his care of him and his favor to him (v. 19-21). And thus, at length, we hope he regained the possession of his own soul.

CHAPTER 16

In this chapter:

- I. The greatness of the calamity that was coming upon the Jewish nation is illustrated by prohibitions given to the prophet neither to set up a house of his own (v. 1-4) nor to go into the house of mourning (v. 5-7) nor into the house of feasting (v. 8, 9).
- II. God is justified in these severe proceedings against them by an account of their great wickedness (v. 10-13).
- III. A hint is given of mercy in reserve (v. 14, 15).
- IV. Some hopes are given that the punishment of the sin should prove the reformation of the sinners, and that they should return to God at length in a way of duty, and so be qualified for his returns to them in a way of favor (v. 16-21).

CHAPTER 17

In this chapter:

- I. God convicts the Jews of the sin of idolatry by the notorious evidence of the fact, and condemns them to captivity for it (v. 1-4).
- II. He shows them the folly of all their carnal confidences, which should stand them in no stead when God's time came to contend with them, and that this was one of the sins upon which his controversy with them was grounded (v. 5-11).
- III. The prophet makes his appeal and address to God upon occasion of the malice of his enemies against him, committing himself to the divine protection, and begging of God to appear for him (v. 12-18).

- IV. God, by the prophet, warns the people to keep holy the Sabbath day, assuring them that, if they did, it should be the lengthening out of their tranquility, but that, if not, God would by some desolating judgment assert the honor of his Sabbaths (v. 19–27).

CHAPTER 18

In this chapter we have:

- I. A general declaration of God's ways in dealing with nations and kingdoms, that he can easily do what he will with them, as easily as the potter can with the clay (v. 1-6), but that he certainly will do what is just and fair with them. If he threaten their ruin, yet upon their repentance he will return in mercy to them, and, when he is coming towards them in mercy, nothing but their sin will stop the progress of his favors (v. 7–10).
- II. A particular demonstration of the folly of the men of Judah and Jerusalem in departing from their God to idols, and so bringing ruin upon themselves notwithstanding the fair warnings given them and God's kind intentions towards them (v. 11–17).
- III. The prophet's complaint to God of the base ungratefulness and unreasonable hatred of his enemies, persecutors, and insult, and his prayers against them (v. 18–23).

CHAPTER 19

The same melancholy theme is the subject of this chapter that was of those foregoing—the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins. This Jeremiah had often foretold; here he has particularly full orders to foretell it again.

- I. He must set their sins in order before them, as he had often done, especially their idolatry (v. 4, 5).
- II. He must describe the particular judgments which were now coming apace upon them for these sins (v. 6-9).
- III. He must do this in the valley of Tophet, with great solemnity, and for some particular reasons (v. 2, 3).
- IV. He must call for a company of the elders together to be witnesses of this (v. 1).
- V. He must confirm this, and attempt to affect his hearers with it, by a sign, which was the breaking of an clay bottle, signifying that they should be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel (v. 10–13).
- VI. When he had done this in the valley of Tophet he ratified it in the court of the temple (v. 14, 15). Thus were all likely means tried to awaken this stupid senseless people to repentance, that their ruin might be prevented; but all in vain.

CHAPTER 20

Such plain dealing as Jeremiah used in the foregoing chapter, one might easily foresee, if it did not convince and humble men, would provoke and frustrate them; and so it did; for here we find:

- I. Jeremiah persecuted by Pashur for preaching that sermon (v. 1, 2).
- II. Pashur threatened for so doing, and the word which Jeremiah had preached confirmed (v. 3-6).
- III. Jeremiah complaining to God concerning it, and the other instances of hard measure that he had since he began to be a prophet, and the grievous temptations he had struggled with (v. 7–10), encouraging himself in God, lodging his appeal with him, not doubting but that he shall yet praise him, by which it appears that he had much grace (v. 11–13) and yet irritably cursing the day of his birth (v. 14–18), by which it appears that he had sad remainders of corruption in him too, and was a man subject to like passions as we are.

CHAPTER 21

It is plain that the prophecies of this book are not placed here in the same order in which they were preached; for there are chapters after this which concern Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jeconiah, who all reigned before Zedekiah, in whose reign the prophecy of this chapter bears date.

Here is:

- I. The message which Zedekiah sent to the prophet, to desire him to inquire of the Lord for them (v. 1, 2).
- II. The answer which Jeremiah, in God's name, sent to that message, in which,
 - ❖ He foretells the certain and inevitable ruin of the city, and the fruitlessness of their attempts for its protection (v. 3-7).
 - ❖ He advises the people to make the best of bad, by going over to the king of Babylon (v. 8-10).
 - ❖ He advises the king and his family to repent and reform (v. 11, 12), and not to trust to the strength of their city and grow secure (v. 13, 14).

CHAPTER 22

Upon occasion of the message sent in the foregoing chapter to the house of the king, we have here recorded some sermons which Jeremiah preached at court, in some preceding reigns, that it might appear they had had fair warning long before that fatal sentence was pronounced upon them, and were put in a way to prevent it.

Here is:

- I. A message sent to the royal family, as it should seem in the reign of Jehoiakim, relating partly to Jehoahaz, who was carried away captive into Egypt, and partly to Jehoiakim, who succeeded him and was now upon the throne. The king and princes are exhorted to execute judgment, and are assured that, if they did so, the royal family should flourish, but otherwise it should be ruined (v. 1-9). Jehoahaz, called here Shallum, is lamented (v. 10-12). Jehoiakim is reprov'd and threatened (v. 13-19).
- II. Another message sent them in the reign of Jehoiachin (alias, Jeconiah) the son of Jehoiakim. He is charged with an obstinate refusal to hear, and is threatened with destruction, and it is foretold that in him Solomon's house should fail (v. 20-30).

CHAPTER 23

In this chapter the prophet, in God's name, is dealing his reproofs and threats.

- I. Among the careless princes, or pastors of the people (v. 1, 2), yet promising to take care of the flock, which they had been wanting in their duty to (v. 3-8).
- II. Among the wicked prophets and priests, whose bad character is here given at large in divers instances, especially their imposing upon the people with their pretended inspirations, at which the prophet is astonished, and for which they must expect to be punished (v. 9-32).
- III. Among the profane people, who ridiculed God's prophets and laughed at them (v. 33-40). When all have thus corrupted their way they must all expect to be told faithfully of it.

CHAPTER 24

In the close of the foregoing chapter we had a general prediction of the utter ruin of Jerusalem, that it should be forsaken and forgotten, which, whatever effect it had upon others, we have reason to think made the prophet himself very sad.

Now, in this chapter, God encourages him, by showing him that, though the desolation seemed to be universal, yet all were not equally involved in it, but God knew how to distinguish, how to separate, between the precious and the vile. Some had gone into captivity already with Jeconiah; over them Jeremiah lamented, but God tells him that it should turn to their good. Others yet remained hardened in their sins, against whom Jeremiah had a just indignation; but those, God tells him, should go into captivity, and it should prove to their hurt.

To inform the prophet of this, and affect him with it:

- I. A vision of two baskets of figs, one very good and the other very bad (v. 1-3).
- II. The explication of this vision, applying the good figs to those that were already sent into captivity for their good (v. 4-7), the bad figs to those that should hereafter be sent into captivity for their hurt (v. 8-10).

CHAPTER 25

The prophecy of this chapter bears date some time before those prophecies in the chapters next foregoing, for they are not placed in the exact order of time in which they were delivered. This is dated in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, that remarkable year when the sword of the Lord began to be drawn and polished.

Here is:

- I. A review of the prophecies that had been delivered to Judah and Jerusalem for many years past, by Jeremiah himself and other prophets, with the little regard given to them and the little success of them (v. 1-7).
- II. A very express threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, by the king of Babylon, for their contempt of God, and their continuance in sin (v. 8-11), to which is annexed a promise of their deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon, after 70 years (v. 12-14).
- III. A prediction of the devastation of divers other nations about, by Nebuchadnezzar, represented by a "cup of fury" put into their hands (v. 15-28), by a sword sent among them (v. 29-33), and a desolation made among the shepherds and their flocks and pastures (v. 34-38); so that we have here judgment beginning at the house of God, but not ending there.

CHAPTER 26

As in the history of the Acts of the Apostles that of their preaching and that of their suffering are interwoven, so it is in the account we have of the prophet Jeremiah; witness this chapter, where we are told:

- I. How faithfully he preached (v. 1-6).
- II. How spitefully he was persecuted for so doing by the priests and the prophets (v. 7-11).
- III. How bravely he stood to his doctrine, in the face of his persecutors (v. 12-15). IV. How wonderfully he was protected and delivered by the prudence of the princes and elders (v. 16-19). Though Urijah, another prophet, was about the same time put to death by Jehoiakim (v. 20-23), yet Jeremiah met with those that sheltered him (v. 24).

CHAPTER 27

Jeremiah the prophet, since he cannot persuade people to submit to God's precept, and so to prevent the destruction of their country by the king of Babylon, is here persuading them to submit to God's providence, by yielding meekly to the king of Babylon. That was the wisest course they could now take, and would be a mitigation of the calamity, and prevent the laying of their country waste by fire and sword. The sacrificing of their liberties would be the saving of their lives.

- I. He gives this counsel, in God's name, to the kings of the neighboring nations, that they might make the best of bad, assuring them that there was no remedy, but they must serve the king of Babylon; and yet in time there should be relief, for his dominion should last but 70 years (v. 1–11).
- II. He gives this counsel to Zedekiah king of Judah particularly (v. 12–15) and to the priests and people, assuring them that the king of Babylon should still proceed against them till things were brought to the last extremity, and a patient submission would be the only way to mitigate the calamity and make it easy (v. 16–22). Thus the prophet, if they would but have hearkened to him, would have directed them in the paths of true policy as well as of true piety.

CHAPTER 28

In the foregoing chapter Jeremiah had charged those prophets with lies who foretold the speedy breaking of the yoke of the king of Babylon and the speedy return of the vessels of the sanctuary; how here we have his contest with a particular prophet upon those heads.

- I. Hananiah, a pretender to prophecy, in contradiction to Jeremiah, foretold the sinking of Nebuchadnezzar's power and the return both of the persons and of the vessels that were carried away (v. 1-4), and, as a sign of this, he broke the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah (v. 10, 11).
- II. Jeremiah wished his words might prove true, but appealed to the event whether they were so or no, not doubting but that would disprove them (v. 5-9). III. The doom both of the deceived and the deceiver are here read. The people that were deceived should have their yoke of wood turned into a yoke of iron (v. 12–14), and the prophet that was the deceiver should be shortly cut off by death, and he was so, accordingly, within two months (v. 15–17).

CHAPTER 29

The contest between Jeremiah and the false prophets was carried on before by preaching, here by writing; there we had sermon against sermon, here we have letter against letter, for some of the false prophets are now carried away into captivity in Babylon, while Jeremiah remains in his own country.

Now here is:

- I. A letter which Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, against their prophets that they had there (v. 1-3), in which letter,
 - ❖ He endeavors to reconcile them to their captivity, to be easy under it and to make the best of it (v. 4-7).
 - ❖ He cautions them not to give any credit to their false prophets, who fed them with hopes of a speedy release (v. 8, 9).
 - ❖ He assures them that God would restore them in mercy to their own land again, at the end of 70 years (v. 10–14).
 - ❖ He foretells the destruction of those who yet continued, and that they should be persecuted with one judgment after another, and sent at last into captivity (v. 15–19).
 - ❖ He prophesies the destruction of two of their false prophets that they had in Babylon, that both soothed them up in their sins and set them bad examples (v. 20–23), and this is the purport of Jeremiah's letter.
- II. Here is a letter which Shemaiah, a false prophet in Babylon, wrote to the priests at Jerusalem, to stir them up to persecute Jeremiah (v. 24–29), and a denunciation of

God's wrath against him for writing such a letter (v. 30–32). Such struggles as these have there always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

CHAPTER 30

The sermon which we have in this and the following chapter is of a very different complexion from all those before. The prophet does indeed, by direction from God, change his voice. Most of what he had said hitherto was by way of reproof and threatening; but these two chapters are wholly taken up with precious promises of a return out of captivity, and that typical of the glorious things reserved for the church in the days of the Messiah.

The prophet is told not only to preach this, but also to write it, because it is intended for the comfort of the generation to come (v. 1-3).

It is here promised:

- I. That they should hereafter have a joyful restoration.
 - ❖ Though they were now in a great deal of pain and terror (v. 4-7).
 - ❖ Though their oppressors were very strong (v. 8–10).
 - ❖ Though a full end was made of other nations, and they were not restored (v. 11).
 - ❖ Though all means of their deliverance seemed to fail and be cut off (v. 12–14).
 - ❖ Though God himself had sent them into captivity, and justly, for their sins (v. 15, 16).
 - ❖ Though all about them looked upon their case as desperate (v. 17).
- II. That after their joyful restoration they should have a happy settlement, that their city should be rebuilt (v. 18), their numbers increased (v. 19, 20), their government established (v. 21), God's covenant with them renewed (v. 22), and their enemies destroyed and cut off (v. 23, 24).

CHAPTER 31

This chapter goes on with the good words and comfortable words which we had in the chapter before, for the encouragement of the captives, assuring them that God would in due time restore them or their children to their own land, and make them a great and happy nation again, especially by sending them the Messiah, whose kingdom and grace many of these promises were to have their full accomplishment.

- I. They shall be restored to peace and honor, and joy and great plenty (v. 1–14).
- II. Their sorrow for the loss of their children shall be at an end (v. 15–17).
- III. They shall repent of their sins, and God will graciously accept them in their repentance (v. 18–20).
- IV. They shall be multiplied and increased, both their children and their cattle, and not be cut off and diminished as they had been (v. 21–30).
- V. God will renew his covenant with them, and enrich it with spiritual blessings (v. 31–34).
- VI. These blessings shall be secured to theirs after them, even to the spiritual seed of Israel forever (v. 35–37).
- VII. As an earnest of this the city of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt (v. 38–40). These exceedingly great and precious promises were firm foundations of hope and full fountains of joy to the poor captives; and we also may apply them to ourselves and mix faith with them.

CHAPTER 32

In this chapter we have:

- I. Jeremiah imprisoned for foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of King Zedekiah (v. 1-5).

- II. We have him buying land, by divine appointment, as an assurance that in due time a happy end should be put to the present troubles (v. 6–15).
- III. We have his prayer, which he offered up to God upon that occasion (v. 16–25).
- IV. We have a message, which God thereupon entrusted him to deliver to the people.
 - ❖ He must foretell the utter destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins (v. 26–35). But, At the same time he must assure them that, though the destruction was total, it should not be final, but that at length their descendants should recover the peaceable possession of their own land (v. 36–44).

The predictions of this chapter, both threats and promises, are much the same with what we have already met with again and again, but here are some circumstances that are very particular and remarkable.

CHAPTER 33

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter - to confirm the promise of the restoration of the Jews, notwithstanding the present desolation of their country and scattering of their people. And these promises have, both in type and tendency, a reference as far forward as to the gospel church, to which this second edition of the Jewish church was at length to resign its dignities and privileges.

It is here promised:

- I. That the city shall be rebuilt and re-established to its former state (v. 1-6).
- II. That the captives, having their sins pardoned, shall be restored (v. 7, 8).
- III. That this shall redound very much to the glory of God (v. 9).
- IV. That the country shall have both joy and plenty (v. 10–14).
- V. That way shall be made for the coming of the Messiah (v. 15, 16).
- VI. That the house of David, the house of Levi, and the house of Israel, shall flourish again, and be established, and all three in the kingdom of Christ; a gospel ministry and the gospel church shall continue while the world stands (v. 17–26).

CHAPTER 34

In this chapter we have two messages which God sent by Jeremiah.

- I. One to foretell the fate of Zedekiah king of Judah, that he should fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, that he should live a captive, but should at last die in peace in his captivity (v. 1-7).
- II. Another to read the doom both of prince and people for their treacherous dealings with God, in bringing back into bondage their servants whom they had released according to the law, and so playing fast and loose with God. They had walked at all adventures with God (v. 8–11), and therefore God would walk at all adventures with them, in bringing the Chaldean army upon them again when they began to hope that they had got clear of them (v. 12–22).

CHAPTER 35

A variety of methods is tried, and every stone turned, to awaken the Jews to a sense of their sin and to bring them to repentance and reformation. The scope and tendency of many of the prophet's sermons was to frighten them out of their disobedience, by setting before them what would be the end thereof if they persisted in it.

The scope of this sermon, in this chapter, is to shame them out of their disobedience if they had any sense of honor left in them for a discourse of this nature to fasten upon.

- I. He sets before them the obedience of the family of the Rechabites to the commands which were left them by Jonadab their ancestor, and how they persevered in that obedience and would not be tempted from it (v. 1–11).
- II. With this he aggravates the disobedience of the Jews to God and their contempt of his precepts (v. 12–15).
- III. He foretells the judgments of God upon the Jews for their impious disobedience to God (v. 16, 17).
- IV. He assures the Rechabites of the blessing of God upon them for their pious obedience to their father (v. 18, 19).

CHAPTER 36

Here is another expedient tried to work upon this neglectful and difficult people, but it is tried in vain. A roll of a book is provided, containing an abstract or abridgment of all the sermons that Jeremiah had preached to them, that they might be put in mind of what they had heard and might the better understand it, when they had it all before them at one view.

Now here we have:

- I. The writing of this roll by Baruch, as Jeremiah dictated it (v. 1-4).
- II. The reading of the roll by Baruch to all the people publicly on a fast day (v. 5-10), afterwards by Baruch to the princes privately (v. 11-19), and lastly by Jehudi to the king (v. 20, 21).
- III. The burning of the roll by the king, with orders to prosecute Jeremiah and Baruch (v. 22-26).
- IV. The writing of another roll, with large additions, particularly of Jehoiakim's doom for burning the former (v. 27-32).

CHAPTER 37

This chapter brings us very near the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for the story of it lies in the latter end of Zedekiah's reign; we have in it:

- I. A general idea of the bad character of that reign (v. 1, 2).
- II. The message which Zedekiah, notwithstanding, sent to Jeremiah to desire his prayers (v. 3).
- III. The flattering hopes which the people had conceived, that the Chaldeans would quit the siege of Jerusalem (v. 5).
- IV. The assurance God gave them by Jeremiah (who was now at liberty, v. 4) that the Chaldean army should renew the siege and take the city (v. 6–10).
- V. The imprisonment of Jeremiah, under pretence that he was a deserter (v. 11–15).
- VI. The kindness which Zedekiah showed him when he was a prisoner (v. 16–21).

CHAPTER 38

In this chapter, just as in the former, we have Jeremiah greatly debased under the anger of the princes, and yet greatly honored by the favor of the king. They used him as a criminal; he used him as a privy-counselor.

Here:

- I. Jeremiah for his faithfulness is put into the dungeon by the princes (v. 1-6).
- II. At the intercession of Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, by special order from the king, he is taken up out of the dungeon and confined only to the court of the prison (v. 7–13).
- III. He has a private conference with the king upon the present conjuncture of affairs (v. 14–22).
- IV. Care is taken to keep that conference private (v. 24–28).

CHAPTER 39

As the prophet Isaiah, after he had largely foretold the deliverance of Jerusalem out of the hands of the king of Assyria, gave a particular narrative of the story, that it might appear how exactly the event answered to the prediction. So the prophet Jeremiah, after he had largely foretold the delivering of Jerusalem into the hands of the king of Babylon, gives a particular account of that sad event for the same reason. That melancholy story we have in this chapter, which serves to disprove the false flattering prophets and to confirm the word of God's messengers.

We are here told:

- I. That Jerusalem, after eighteen months' siege, was taken by the Chaldean army (v. 1-3).
- II. That king Zedekiah, attempting to make his escape, was seized and made a miserable captive to the king of Babylon (v. 4-7).
- III. That Jerusalem was burnt to the ground, and the people were carried captive, except the poor (v. 8-10).
- IV. That the Chaldeans were very kind to Jeremiah, and took particular care of him (v. 11-14).
- V. That Ebed-melech too, for his kindness, had a protection from God himself in this day of desolation (v. 15-18).

CHAPTER 40

We have attended Jerusalem's funeral pile, and have taken our leave of the captives that were carried to Babylon, not expecting to hear any more of them in this book: perhaps we may in Ezekiel. We must in this and the four following chapters observe the story of those few Jews that were left to remain in the land after their brethren were carried away.

It is a very melancholy story; for, though at first there were some hopeful prospects of their well-doing, they soon appeared as stubborn in sin as ever, not humbled and unreformed, till, all the rest of the judgments threatened in Deuteronomy 28 being brought upon them. That which in the last verse of that dreadful chapter completes the threats were accomplished, "*The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again*"

In this chapter we have:

- I. A more particular account of Jeremiah's discharge and his settlement with Gedaliah (v. 1-6).
- II. The great resort of the Jews that remained scattered in the neighboring countries to Gedaliah, who was made their governor under the king of Babylon; and the good posture they were in for a while under him (v. 7-12).
- III. A treacherous design formed against Gedaliah, by Ishmael, which we shall find executed in the next chapter (v.13-16).

CHAPTER 41

It is a very tragic story that is related in this chapter, and shows that evil pursues sinners. The black cloud that was gathering in the foregoing chapter here bursts in a dreadful storm. Those few Jews that escaped the captivity were proud to think that they were still in their own land, when their brethren had gone they knew not whither, were fond of the wine and summer-fruits they had gathered, and were very secure under Gedaliah's protector ship, when, on a sudden, even these remains prove ruins too.

- I. Gedaliah is barbarously slain by Ishmael (v. 1, 2).

- II. All the Jews that were with him were slain likewise (v. 3) and a pit filled with their dead bodies (v. 9).
- III. Some devout men, to the number of fourscore, that were going towards Jerusalem, were drawn in by Ishmael, and murdered likewise (v. 4-7). Only ten of them escaped (v. 8).
- IV. Those that escaped the sword were taken prisoners by Ishmael, and carried off towards the country of the Ammonites (v. 10).
- V. By the conduct and courage of Johanan, though the death of the slain is not revenged, yet the prisoners are recovered, and he now becomes their commander-in-chief (v. 11–16).
- VI. His project is to carry them into the land of Egypt (v. 17, 18), which we shall hear more of in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 42

Johanan and the captains being strongly bent upon going into Egypt, either their affections or politics advising them to take that course, they had a great desire that God should direct them to do so too like Balaam, who, when he was determined to go and curse Israel, asked God leave.

Here is

- I. The fair bargain that was made between Jeremiah and them about consulting God in this matter (v. 1-6).
- II. The message at large which God sent them, in answer to their enquiry, in which
 - ❖ They are commanded and encouraged to continue in the land of Judah, and assured that if they did so it should be well with them (v. 7–12).
 - ❖ They are forbidden to go to Egypt, and are plainly told that if they did it would be their ruin (v. 13–18).
 - ❖ They are charged with dissimulation in their asking what God's will was in this matter and disobedience when they were told what it was; and sentence is accordingly passed upon them (v. 19–22).

CHAPTER 43

Jeremiah had faithfully delivered his message from God in the foregoing chapter, and the case was made so very plain by it that one would have thought there needed no more words about it; but we find it quite otherwise.

Here is:

- I. The people's contempt of this message; they denied it to be the word of God (v. 1-3) and then made no difficulty of going directly contrary to it. Into Egypt they went, and took Jeremiah himself along with them (v. 4-7).
- II. God's pursuit of them with another message, foretelling the king of Babylon's pursuit of them into Egypt (v. 8–13).

CHAPTER 44

In this chapter we have:

- I. An awakening sermon which Jeremiah preaches to the Jews in Egypt, to reprove them for their idolatry, notwithstanding the warnings given them both by the word and the rod of God and to threaten the judgments of God against them for it (v. 1–14).
- II. The impudent and impious contempt which the people put upon this warning, and their declared resolution to persist in their idolatries notwithstanding, in despite of God and Jeremiah (v. 15–19).

- III. The sentence passed upon them for their obstinacy, that they should all be cut off and perish in Egypt except a very small number; and, as a sign or earnest of it, the king of Egypt should shortly fall into the hands of the king of Babylon and be unable any longer to protect them (v. 20–30).

CHAPTER 45

The prophecy we have in this chapter concerns Baruch only, yet is intended for the support and encouragement of all the Lord's people that serve him faithfully and keep closely to him in difficult trying times. It is placed here after the story of the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews, but was delivered long before, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, as was the prophecy in the next chapter, and probably those that follow.

We here find:

- I. How Baruch was terrified when he was brought into trouble for writing and reading Jeremiah's roll (v. 1-3).
- II. How his fears were checked with a reproof for his great expectations and silenced with a promise of special protection (v. 4, 5). Though Baruch was only Jeremiah's scribe, yet this notice is taken of his frights, and this provision made for his comfort; for God despises not any of his servants, but graciously concerns himself for the meanest and weakest, for Baruch the scribe as well as for Jeremiah the prophet.

CHAPTER 46

How judgment began at the house of God we have found in the foregoing prophecy and history; but now we shall find that it did not end there. In this and the following chapters we have predictions of the desolation of the neighboring nations, and those brought upon them too mostly by the king of Babylon, till at length Babylon itself comes to be reckoned with.

The prophecy against Egypt is here put first and takes up this whole chapter, in which we have:

- I. A prophecy of the defeat of Pharaoh-necho's army by the Chaldean forces at Carchemish, which was accomplished soon after, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (v. 1–12)
- II. A prophecy of the descent which Nebuchadnezzar should make upon the land of Egypt, and his success in it, which was accomplished some years after the destruction of Jerusalem (v. 13–26).
- III. A word of comfort to the Israel of God in the midst of those calamities (v. 27, 28).

CHAPTER 47

This chapter reads the Philistines their doom, as the former read the Egyptians theirs and by the same hand, that of Nebuchadnezzar. It is short, but terrible; and Tyre and Zidon, though they lay at some distance from them, come in sharers with them in the destruction here threatened.

- I. It is foretold that the forces of the northern crowns should come upon them, to their great terror (v. 1-5).
- II. That the war should continue long, and their endeavors to put an end to it should be in vain (v. 6-7).

CHAPTER 48

Moab is next set to the bar before Jeremiah the prophet, whom God has constituted judge over nations and kingdoms, from his mouth to receive its doom. Isaiah's predictions concerning Moab had had their accomplishment (we had the predictions Isaiah. 15 and 16 and the like

Amos 2:1), and they were fulfilled when the Assyrians, under Salmanassar, invaded and distressed Moab. But this is a prophecy of the desolation of Moab by the Chaldeans, which were accomplished under Nebuzaradan, about five years after he had destroyed Jerusalem.

Here is:

- I. The destruction foretold, that it should be great and general
 - ❖ should extend itself to all parts of the country (v. 1–6, 8 , and again v. 21–25, 34),
 - ❖ that spoilers should come upon them and force some to flee (v. 9),
 - ❖ should carry many into captivity (v. 12, 46), that the enemy should come shortly (v. 16),
 - ❖ come swiftly and surprise them (v. 40, 41),
 - ❖ that he should make thorough work (v. 10)
 - ❖ lay the country quite waste, though it was very strong (v. 14, 15),
 - ❖ that there should be no escaping (v. 42, 45),
 - ❖ that this should force them to quit their idols (v. 13, 35)
 - ❖ put an end to all their joy (v. 33, 34),
 - ❖ their neighbors shall lament them (v. 17–19)
 - ❖ the prophet himself does (v. 31, 36 , etc.).
- II. The causes of this destruction assigned; it was sin that brought this ruin upon them, their pride, and security, and carnal confidence (v. 7, 11, 14, 29), and their contempt of and enmity to God and his people (v. 26, 27, 30).
- III. A promise of the restoration of Moab (v. 48).

CHAPTER 49

The cup of trembling still goes round, and the nations must all drink of it, according to the instructions given to Jeremiah, chapter 25:15. This chapter puts it into the hands,

- I. Of the Ammonites (v. 1-6).
- II. Of the Edomites (v. 7–22).
- III. Of the Syrians (v. 23–27).
- IV. Of the Kedarenes, and the kingdoms of Hazor (v. 28–33).
- V. Of the Elamites (v. 34–39).

When Israel was scarcely saved where shall all these appear?

CHAPTER 50

In this chapter, and that which follows, we have the judgment of Babylon, which is put last of Jeremiah's prophecies against the Gentiles because it was last accomplished. When the cup of God's fury went round (25:17) the king of Sheshach, Babylon, drank last.

Babylon was employed as the rod in God's hand for the chastising of all the other nations, and now at length that rod shall be thrown into the fire. The destruction of Babylon by Cyrus was foretold, long before it came to its height, by Isaiah, and now again, when it has come to its height, by Jeremiah. For, though at this time he saw that kingdom flourishing "like a green bay-tree," yet at the same time he foresaw it withered and cut down.

As Isaiah's prophecies of the destruction of Babylon and the deliverance of Israel out of it seem designed to typify the evangelical triumphs of all believers over the powers of darkness, and the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ, so Jeremiah's prophecies of the same events seem designed to point at the apocalyptic triumphs of the gospel church in the latter

days over the New Testament Babylon., Many passages in the Revelation being borrowed hence.

The kingdom of Babylon being much larger and stronger than any of the kingdoms here prophesied against, its fall was the more considerable in itself; and, it having been more oppressive to the people of God than any of the other, the prophet is very copious upon this subject, for the comfort of the captives; and what was foretold in general often before (25:12 and 27:7) is here more particularly described, and with a great deal of prophetic heat as well as light. The terrible judgments God had in store for Babylon, and the glorious blessings he had in store for his people that were captives there, are intermixed and counterchanged in the prophecy of this chapter; for Babylon was destroyed to make way for the turning again of the captivity of God's people.

Here is:

- I. The ruin of Babylon (v. 1–3, 9-16, 21-32, and 35–46).
- II. The redemption of God's people (v. 4–8, 17-20 and 33, 34). And these being set the one against the other, it is easy to say which one would choose to take one's lot with, the persecuting Babylonians, who, though now in pomp, are reserved for so great a ruin, or the persecuted Israelites, who, though now in thralldom, are reserved for so great a glory.

CHAPTER 51

The prophet, in this chapter, goes on with the prediction of Babylon's fall, to which other prophets also bore witness. He is very abundant and lively in describing the foresight God had given him of it, for the encouragement of the pious captives, whose deliverance depended upon it and was to be the result of it.

Here is:

- I. The record of Babylon's doom, with the particulars of it, intermixed with the grounds of God's controversy with her, many aggravations of her fall, and great encouragement given thence to the Israel of God, that suffered such hard things by her (v. 1–58).
- II. The representation and approval of this by the throwing of a copy of this prophecy into the river Euphrates (v. 59–64).

CHAPTER 52

History is the best expositor of prophecy; and therefore, for the better understanding of the prophecies of this book which relate to the destruction of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, we are here furnished with an account of that sad event. It is much the same with the history we had 2 Kings 24 and 25. Many of the particulars we had before in that book, but the matter is here repeated and put together, to give light to the book of the Lamentations, which follows next, and to serve as a key to it. That article in the close concerning the advancement of Jehoiachin in his captivity, which happened after Jeremiah's time, gives color to the conjecture of those who suppose that this chapter was not written by Jeremiah himself, but by some man divinely inspired among those in captivity, for a constant memorandum to those who in Babylon preferred Jerusalem above their chief joy.

In this chapter we have

- I. The bad reign of Zedekiah, very bad in regard both of sin and of punishment (v. 1-3).
- II. The besieging and taking of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans (v. 4-7).
- III. The severe usage which Zedekiah and the princes met with (v. 8–11).

- IV. The destruction of the temple and the city (v. 12–14). V. The captivity of the people (v. 15, 16) and the numbers of those that were carried away into captivity (v. 28–30).
- V. The carrying off of the plunder of the temple (v. 17–23).
- VI. The slaughter of the priests, and some other great men, in cold blood (v. 24–27).
- VII. The better days which king Jehoiachin lived to see in the latter end of his time, after the death of Nebuchadnezzar (v. 31–34).

Lecture 3: The Holy Book of the Prophet Lamentation

Introduction:

Since what Solomon says, though contrary to the common opinion of the world, is certainly true, that "*sorrow is better than laughter, and it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting,*" we should come to the reading and consideration of the heartbreaking chapters of this book. Not only willingly, but also with an expectation to edify ourselves by them. That we may do this, we must compose ourselves to a holy sadness and resolve to weep with the weeping prophet.

Let us consider

- I. The title of this book; in the Hebrew it has one, but is called (as the books of Moses are) from the first word *Ecah* — *How*; but the Jewish commentators call it, as the Greeks do, and we from them, *Kinoth* — *Lamentations*. As we have sacred songs of joy, so have we sacred songs of lamentation. Such variety of methods has Infinite Wisdom taken to work upon us and moves our affections, and so softens our hearts and make them susceptible of the impressions of divine truths, as the wax of the seal. We have not only *piped unto you*, but have *mourned* likewise, Matthew 11:17.
- II. The penman of this book; it was Jeremiah the prophet; therefore this book is fitly adjoined to the book of his prophecy, and is as an appendix to it. We had there at large the predictions of the desolation of Judah and Jerusalem, and then the history of them, to show how punctually the predictions were accomplished, for the confirming of our faith.

Now here we have the expressions of his sorrow upon occasion of them, to show that he was very sincere in the protestations he had often made that he did not desire the woeful day, but that, on the contrary, the prospect of it filled him with bitterness. When he saw these calamities at a distance, he wished that his "*head were waters and his eyes fountains of tears.*" When they came, he made it to appear that he did not dissemble in that wish, and that he was far from being disaffected to his country, which was the crime his enemies charged him with.

Though his country had been very unkind to him, and though the ruin of it was both a proof that he was a true prophet and a punishment of them for prosecuting him as a false prophet, which might have tempted him to rejoice in it, yet he sadly lamented it, and herein showed a better temper than that which Jonah was of with respect to Nineveh.

- III. The occasion of these Lamentations was the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldean army and the dissolution of the Jewish state both civil and ecclesiastical thereby. Some of the rabbi will have these to be the Lamentations which Jeremiah penned upon occasion of the death of Josiah, which are mentioned 2 Chap. 35-25, but, though it is true that saying that opened the door to all the following calamities. Yet these Lamentations seem to be penned in the sight, not in the foresight, of those calamities—when they had already come, not when they were at a distance; and these is nothing of Josiah in them, and his praise, as was no question, in the lamentations for him.

No, it is Jerusalem's funeral that this is an elegy upon. Others of them will have these Lamentations to be contained in the roll that Baruch wrote from Jeremiah's mouth, which Jehoiakim burnt. They suggest that at first there were in it only the 1st, 2nd, and 4th chapters, but that the 3rd and 5th were the *many like words* that were afterwards

added. But this is a groundless fancy; that roll is expressly said to be a repetition and summary of the prophet's sermons, Jeremiah. 36:2.

- IV. The composition of it is not only poetical, but alphabetical. All except the 5th chapter, as some of David's psalms are. Each verse begins with a several letter in the order of the Hebrew alphabet, the first *aleph*, the second *beth*, etc. But the 3rd chapter is a triple alphabet, the first three beginning with *aleph*, the next three with *beth*, etc. Which was helpful to memorize (it being designed that these mournful ditties should be known by heart) and was an elegance in writing then valued and therefore not now to be despised.

They observe that in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th chapters, the letter *pe* is put before *ain*, which in all the Hebrew alphabets follows it. For a reason of which Dr. Lightfoot offers this conjecture, That the letter *ajin*, which is the numeral letter for Septuagint, was thus, by being displaced, made remarkable, to put them in mind of the seventy years at the end of which God would turn again their captivity.

- V. The great use of it, no doubt, was to the pious Jews in their sufferings. It furnishing them with spiritual language to express their natural grief by, helping to preserve the lively remembrance of Zion among them. Their children that never saw it, when they were in Babylon, directing their tears into the right channel (for they are here taught to mourn for sin and mourn to God). Moreover encouraging their hopes that God would yet return and have mercy upon them. It is of use to us, to affect us with godly sorrow for the calamities of the church of God, as becomes those that are living members of it and are resolved to take our lot with it.

CHAPTER 1

We have here the first alphabet of this lamentation, twenty-two stanzas, in which the miseries of Jerusalem are bitterly bewailed and her present deplorable condition is aggravated by comparing it with her former prosperous state. All along, sin is acknowledged and complained of as the cause of all these miseries; and God is appealed to for justice against their enemies and applied to for compassion towards them.

The chapter is all of a piece, and the several complain are interwoven; but here is,

- I. A complaint made to God of their calamities, and his compassionate consideration desired (v. 1–11).
- II. The same complaint made to their friends, and their compassionate consideration desired (v. 12–17).
- III. An appeal to God and his righteousness concerning it (v. 18–22), in which he is justified in their affliction and is humbly pleaded for to justify himself in their deliverance.

CHAPTER 2

The second alphabetical elegy is set to the same mournful tune with the former, and the substance of it is much the same; it begins with Ecah, as that did, "How sad is our case! Alas for us!"

- I. Here is the anger of Zion's God taken notice of as the cause of her calamities (v. 1-9).
- II. Here is the sorrow of Zion's children taken notice of as the effect of her calamities (v. 10–19).
- III. The complaint is made to God, and the matter referred to his compassionate consideration (v. 20–22). The hand that wounded must make whole.

CHAPTER 3

The scope of this chapter is the same with that of the two foregoing chapters, but the composition is somewhat different; that was in long verse, this is in short, that was in single alphabets, this is in a triple one.

Here is:

- I. A sad complaint of God's displeasure and the fruits of it (v. 1–20).
- II. Words of comfort to God's people when they are in trouble and distress (v. 21–36).
- III. Duty prescribed in this afflicted state (v. 37–41).
- IV. The complaint renewed (v. 42–54).
- V. Encouragement taken to hope in God, and continue waiting for his salvation, with an appeal to his justice against the persecutors of the church (v. 55–66). Some make all this to be spoken by the prophet himself when he was imprisoned and persecuted. But it seems rather to be spoken in the person of the church now in captivity and in a manner desolate, and in the desolation of which the prophet did in a particular manner interest himself.

But the complaints here are somewhat more general than those in the foregoing chapter, being accommodated to the case as well of particular persons as of the public, and intended for the use of the closet rather than of the solemn assembly. Some think Jeremiah makes these complaints, not only as an intercessor for Israel, but as a type of Christ, who was thought by some to be Jeremiah the weeping prophet, because he was much in tears (Matthew 16:14) and to him many of the passages here may be applied.

CHAPTER 4

This chapter is another single alphabet of Lamentations for the destruction of Jerusalem, like those in the first two chapters.

- I. The prophet here laments the injuries and indignities done to those to whom respect used to be shown (v. 1, 2).
- II. He laments the dreadful effects of the famine to which they were reduced by the siege (v. 3–10).
- III. He laments the taking and sacking of Jerusalem and its amazing desolation (v. 11, 12).
- IV. He acknowledges that the sins of their leaders were the cause of all these calamities (v. 13–16).
- V. He gives up all as doomed to utter ruin, for their enemies were every way too hard for them (v. 17–20).
- VI. He foretells the destruction of the Edomites who triumphed in Jerusalem's fall (v. 21).
- VII. He foretells the return of the captivity of Zion at last (v. 22).

CHAPTER 5

This chapter, though it has the same number of verses with the 1st, 2nd, and 4th, is not alphabetical, as they were, but the scope of it is the same with that of all the foregoing elegies.

We have in it:

- I. A representation of the present calamitous state of God's people in their captivity (v. 1–16).
- II. A protestation of their concern for God's sanctuary, as that which lay nearer their heart than any secular interest of their own (v. 17, 18).

- III. A humble supplication to God and expostulation with him, for the returns of mercy (v. 19–22); for those that lament and do not pray sin in their lamentations. Some ancient versions call this chapter, "The Prayer of Jeremiah."

Lecture 4: The Holy Book of the Prophet Ezekiel

When we entered upon the writings of the prophets, which speak of the *things that should be hereafter*, we seemed to have the same call that St. John had (Rev. 4:1), *Come up hither*. But, when we enter upon the prophecy of this book, it is as if the voice said, *Come up higher*; as we go forward in time (for Ezekiel prophesied in the captivity, as Jeremiah prophesied just before it). So we soar upward in discoveries yet more sublime of the divine glory.

These waters of the sanctuary still grow deeper. So far are they from being shallow that in some places they are scarcely very deep; yet, deep as they are, out of them flow streams which *make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High*.

As to this prophecy now before us, we may inquire:

- I. Concerning the penman of it—it was Ezekiel; his name signifies, *The strength of God*, or one *girt or strengthened of God*. He girded up the loins of his mind to the service, and God put strength into him. Whom God calls to any service he will himself enable for it; if he gives commission, he will give power to execute it. Ezekiel's name was answered when God said (and no doubt did as he said), *I have made thy face strong against their faces*. The learned Selden. If we may give credit to the tradition of the Jews, he was put to death by the captives in Babylon, for his faithfulness and boldness in reprovng them; it is stated that they dragged him upon the stones till his brains were dashed out. An Arabic historian says that he was put to death and was buried in the sepulcher of Shem the son of Noah.
- II. Concerning the date of it—the place whence it is dated and the time when. The scene is laid in Babylon, when it was a *house of bondage* to the *Israel of God*; there the prophecies of this book were preached, there they were written, when the prophet himself, and the people to whom he prophesied, were captives there.

Ezekiel and Daniel are the only writing prophets of the Old Testament who lived and prophesied any where but in the land of Israel, except we add Jonah, who was sent to Nineveh to prophesy. Ezekiel prophesied in the beginning of the captivity, Daniel in the latter end of it.

It was an indication of God's good-will to them, and his gracious designs concerning them in their affliction, that he raised up prophets among them, both to convince them when, in the beginning of their troubles, they were secure and not humbled, which was Ezekiel's business, and to comfort them when, in the latter end of their troubles, they were dejected and discouraged. If the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have used such apt and proper means to cure them.

- III. Concerning the matter and scope of it.
 - ❖ There is much in it that is very mysterious, dark, and hard to be understood, especially in the beginning and the latter end of it, which therefore the Jewish rabbi forbade the reading of to their young men, till they came to be thirty years of age, lest by the difficulties they met with there they should be prejudiced against the scriptures; but if we read these difficult parts of scripture with humility and reverence, and search them diligently, though we may not be able to untie all the knots we meet with, any more than we can solve all the phenomena in the book of nature, yet we may from them, as from the book of nature, gather a great deal for the confirming of our faith and the encouraging of our hope in the God we worship.
 - ❖ Though the visions here are intricate, such as an elephant may swim in, yet the sermons are mostly plain, such as a lamb may wade in; and the chief design of them is

to show God's people their transgressions, that in their captivity they might be repenting and not repining. It should seem the prophet was constantly attended (for we read of their *sitting before him as God's people sat to hear his words*, 33:31), and that he was occasionally consulted, for we read of the elders of Israel who came to *inquire of the Lord* by him, 14:1-3 And as it was of great use to the oppressed captives themselves to have a prophet with them, so it was a testimony to their holy religion against their oppressors who ridiculed it and them.

- ❖ Though the reproofs and the threatening here are very sharp and bold, yet towards the close of the book very comfortable assurances are given of great mercy God had in store for them; and there, at length, we shall meet with something that has reference to gospel times, and which was to have its accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, of whom indeed this prophet speaks less than almost any of the prophets.

But by opening the *terrors of the Lord* he prepares Christ's way. By the law is the knowledge of sin, and so it becomes our *schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*. The visions which were the prophet's credentials we have chapter 1-3, the reproofs and threats chapter 4-24. The comforts which we have in the latter part of the book we have messages sent to the nations that bordered upon the land of Israel, whose destruction is foretold (chapter 25-35). To make way for the restoration of God's Israel and the re-establishment of their city and temple, which are foretold chapter. 36 to the end. Those who would apply the comforts to themselves must apply the convictions to themselves.

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter we have:

- I. The common circumstances of the prophecy now to be delivered, the time when it was delivered (v. 1), the place where (v. 2), and the person by whom (v. 3).
- II. The uncommon introduction to it by a vision of the glory of God
 - ❖ In his attendance and retinue in the upper world, where his throne is surrounded with angels, here called "*living creatures*," (v. 4–14).
 - ❖ In his providence concerning the lower world, represented by the wheels and their motions (v. 15–25).
 - ❖ In the face of The Lord Jesus Christ sitting upon the throne (v. 26–28). And the more we are acquainted, and the more intimately we converse, with the glory of God in these three branches of it, the more commanding influence will divine revelation have upon us and the more ready shall we be to submit to it, which is the thing aimed at in prefacing the prophecies of this book with these visions. When such a God of glory speaks, it concerns us to hear with attention and reverence; it is at our peril if we do not

CHAPTER 2

What our Lord Jesus Christ said to St. Paul (Acts 26:16) may fitly be applied to the prophet Ezekiel, to whom the same Lord Jesus Christ is here speaking, "*Rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister.*" We have here Ezekiel's ordination to his office, which the vision was designed to fit him for, not to entertain his curiosity with uncommon speculations, but to put him into business.

Now here:

- I. He is commissioned to go as a prophet to the house of Israel, now captives in Babylon, and to deliver God's messages to them from time to time (v. 1-5).
- II. He is cautioned not to be afraid of them (v. 6).
- III. He is instructed what to say to them, and has words put into his mouth, signified by the vision of a roll, which he was ordered to eat (v. 7–10), and which, in the next chapter, we find he did eat.

CHAPTER 3

In this chapter we have the further preparation of the prophet for the work to which God called him.

- I. His eating the roll that was presented to him in the close of the foregoing chapter (v. 1-3).
- II. Further instructions and encouragement given him to the same purport with those in the foregoing chapter (v. 4–11).
- III. The mighty impulse he was under, with which he was carried to those that were to be his hearers (v. 12–15).
- IV. A further explication of his office and business as a prophet, under the similitude of a watchman (v. 16–21).
- V. The restraining and restoring of the prophet's liberty of speech, as God pleased (v. 22–27).

CHAPTER 4

Ezekiel was now among the captives in Babylon, but they there had Jerusalem still upon their hearts; the devout captives looked towards it with an eye of faith (as Daniel 6:10). The arrogant ones looked towards it with an eye of pride, and flattered themselves with a conceit that they should shortly return thither again. Those that remained corresponded with the

captives, and, it is likely, buoyed them up with hopes that all would be well yet, as long as Jerusalem was standing in its strength. Perhaps upbraided those with their folly who had surrendered at first; therefore, to take down this presumption, God gives the prophet, in this chapter, a very clear and affecting foresight of the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army and the calamities which would attend that siege.

Two things are here represented to him in vision:

- I. The fortifications that should be raised against the city; this is signified by the prophet's laying siege to the portraiture of Jerusalem (v. 1-3) and laying first on one side and then on the other side before it (v. 4-8).
- II. The famine that should rage within the city; this is signified by his eating very coarse fare, and confining himself to a little of it, so long as this typical representation lasted (v. 9-17).

CHAPTER 5

In this chapter we have a further, and no less terrible, denunciation of the judgments of God, which were coming with all speed and force upon the Jewish nation, which would utterly ruin it; for when God judges he will overcome.

This destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is here,

- I. Represented by a sign, the cutting, and burning, and scattering of hair (v. 1-4).
- II. That sign is expounded, and applied to Jerusalem.
 - ❖ Sin is charged upon Jerusalem as the cause of this desolation
 - contempt of God's law (v. 5-7)
 - profanation of his sanctuary (v. 11).
 - ❖ 2 Wrath is threatened, great wrath (v. 8-10), a variety of miseries (v. 12, 16, 17), such as should be their reproach and ruin (v. 13-15).

CHAPTER 6

In this chapter we have,

- I. A threatening of the destruction of Israel for their idolatry, and the destruction of their idols with them (v. 1-7).
- II. A promise of the gracious return of a remnant of them to God, by true repentance and reformation (v. 8-10).
- III. Directions given to the prophet and others, the Lord's servants, to lament both the iniquities and the calamities of Israel (v. 11-14).

CHAPTER 7

In this chapter the approaching ruin of the land of Israel is most particularly foretold in affecting expressions often repeated, that if possible they might be awakened by repentance to prevent it.

The prophet must tell them,

- I. That it will be a final ruin, a complete utter destruction, which would make an end of them, a miserable end (v. 1-6).
- II. That it is an approaching ruin, just at the door (v. 7-10).
- III. That it is an unavoidable ruin, because they had by sin brought it upon themselves (v. 10-15).
- IV. That their strength and wealth should be no fence against it (v. 16-19).
- V. That the temple, which they trusted in, should itself be ruined (v. 20-22).

- VI. That it should be a universal ruin, the sin that brought it having been universal (v. 23–27).

CHAPTER 8

God, having given the prophet a clear foresight of the people's miseries that were hastening on, here gives him a clear insight into the people's wickedness, by which God was provoked to bring these miseries upon them, that he might justify God in all his judgments, might the more particularly reprove the sins of the people, and with the more satisfaction foretell their ruin.

Here God, in vision, brings him to Jerusalem, to show him the sins that were committed there, though God had begun to contend with them (v. 1-4), and there he sees,

- I. The image of jealousy set up at the gate of the altar (v. 5, 6).
- II. The elders of Israel worshipping all manner of images in a secret chamber (v. 7–12).
- III. The women weeping for Tammuz (v. 13, 14).
- IV. The men worshipping the sun (v. 15, 16). And then appeals to him whether such a provoking people should have any pity shown them (v. 17, 18).

CHAPTER 9

The prophet had, in vision, seen the wickedness that was committed at Jerusalem, in the foregoing chapter, and we may be sure that it was not represented to him worse than really it was; now here follows, of course, a representation of their ruin approaching; for when sin goes before judgments come next.

Here is:

- I. Preparation made of instruments that were to be employed in the destruction of the city (v. 1, 2).
- II. The removal of the Shechinah from the cherubim to the threshold of the temple (v. 3).
- III. Orders given to one of the persons employed, who is distinguished from the rest, for the marking of a remnant to be preserved from the common destruction (v. 3, 4).
- IV. The warrant signed for the execution of those that were not marked, and the execution begun accordingly (v. 5-7).
- V. The prophet's intercession for the mitigation of the sentence, and a denial of any mitigation, the decree having now gone forth (v. 8–10).
- VI. The report made by him that was to mark the pious remnant of what he had done in that matter (v. 11). And this shows a usual method of Providence in the government of the world.

CHAPTER 10

The prophet had observed to us (8:4) that when he was in vision at Jerusalem he saw the same appearance of the glory of God there that he had seen by the river Chebar; now, in this chapter, he gives us some account of the appearance there, as far as was requisite for the clearing up of two further indications of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, which God here gave the prophet

- I. The scattering of the coals of fire upon the city, which were taken from between the cherubim (v. 1-7).
- II. The removal of the glory of God from the temple, and its being upon the wing to be gone (v. 8–22). When God goes out from a people all judgments break in upon them.

CHAPTER 11

This chapter concludes the vision, which Ezekiel saw, and this part of it furnished him with two messages:

- I. A message of wrath against those that continued still at Jerusalem, and were there in the height of presumption, thinking they should never fall (v. 1–13).
- II. A message of comfort to those who were carried captives into Babylon and were there in the depth of hopelessness, thinking they should never rise. And, as the former are assured that God has judgments in store for them notwithstanding their present security, so the later are assured that God has mercy in store for them notwithstanding their present distress (v. 14–21). And so the glory of God removes further (v. 22, 23). The vision disappears (v. 24), and Ezekiel faithfully gives his hearers an account of it (v. 25).

CHAPTER 12

Though the vision of God's glory had gone up from the prophet, yet his word comes to him still, and is by him sent to the people, and to the same purport with that which was discovered to him in the vision, namely, to set forth the terrible judgments that were coming upon Jerusalem, by which the city and temple should be entirely laid waste.

In this chapter:

- I. The prophet, by removing his stuff, and quitting his lodgings, must be a sign to set forth Zedekiah's flight out of Jerusalem in the utmost confusion when the Chaldeans took the city (v. 1–16).
- II. The prophet, by eating his meat with trembling, must be a sign to set forth the famine in the city during the siege, and the consternation that the inhabitants should be in (v. 17–20).
- III. A message is sent from God to the people, to assure them that all these predictions should have their accomplishment very shortly, and not be deferred, as they flattered themselves they would be (v. 21–28).

CHAPTER 13

Mention had been made, in the chapter before, of the vain visions and flattering divinations with which the people of Israel suffered themselves to be imposed upon (v. 24); now this whole chapter is leveled against them. God's faithful prophets are nowhere so sharp upon any sort of sinners as upon the false prophets, not because they were the most spiteful enemies to them, but because they put the highest affront upon God and did the greatest mischief to his people.

The prophet here shows the sin and punishment

- I. Of the false prophets (v. 1–16).
- II. Of the false prophetesses (v. 17–23). Both agreed to sooth men up in their sins, and, under pretence of comforting God's people, to flatter them with hopes that they should yet have peace; but the prophets shall be proved liars, their prophecies mere shams, and the expectations of the people illusions; for God will let them know that "*the deceived and the deceiver are his,*" are both accountable to him, Job 12:16.

CHAPTER 14

Hearing the word, and prayer, are two great ordinances of God, in which we are to give honor to him and may hope to find favor and acceptance with him; and yet in this chapter, to our great surprise, we find some waiting upon God in the one and some in the other and yet not meeting with success as they expected.

- I. The elders of Israel come to hear the word, and inquire of the prophet, but, because they are not duly qualified, they meet with a rebuke instead of acceptance (v. 1-5) and are called upon to repent of their sins and reform their lives; else it is at their peril to inquire of God (v. 6–11).
- II. Noah, Daniel, and Job, are supposed to pray for this people, and yet, because the decree has gone forth, and the destruction of them is determined by a variety of judgments, their prayers shall not be answered (v. 12–21). And yet it is promised, in the close, that a remnant shall escape (v. 22, 23).

CHAPTER 15

Ezekiel has again and again, in God's name, foretold the utter ruin of Jerusalem; but, it should seem, he finds it hard to reconcile himself to it, and to accept the will of God in this severe dispensation; and therefore God takes various methods to satisfy him not only that it shall be so, but that there is no remedy: it must be so; it is fit that it should be so.

Here, in this short chapter, he shows him (probably with design that he should tell the people) that it was as requisite Jerusalem should be destroyed as that the dead and withered branches of a vine should be cut off and thrown into the fire.

- I. The similitude is very elegant (v. 1-5), but
- II. The explanation of the similitude is very dreadful (v. 6-8).

CHAPTER 16

Still God is justifying himself in the desolation he is about to bring upon Jerusalem; and very largely, in this chapter, he shows the prophet, and orders him to show the people, that he did but punish them as their sins deserved. In the foregoing chapter he had compared Jerusalem to an unfruitful vine, that was fit for nothing but the fire; in this chapter he compares it to an adulteress, that, in justice, ought to be abandoned and exposed, and he must therefore show the people their abominations, that they might see how little reason they had to complain of the judgments they were under.

In this long discourse are set forth:

- I. The shameful and awful beginnings of that church and nation (v. 3-5).
- II. The many honors and favors God had bestowed upon them (v. 6–14).
- III. Their treacherous and ungrateful departures from him to the services and worship of idols, here represented by the most impudent harlotry (v. 15–34).
- IV. A threatening of terrible destroying judgments, which God would bring upon them for this sin (v. 35–43).
- V. An aggravation both of their sin and of their punishment, by comparison with Sodom and Samaria (v. 44–59).
- VI. A promise of mercy in the close, which God would show to a penitent remnant (v. 60–63). And this is designed for admonition to us.

CHAPTER 17

God was, in the foregoing chapter, reckoning with the people of Judah, and bringing ruin upon them for their treachery in breaking covenant with him; in this chapter he is reckoning with the king of Judah for his treachery in breaking covenant with the king of Babylon; for when God came to contend with them he found many grounds of his controversy.

The thing was now in doing: Zedekiah was practicing with the king of Egypt underhand for assistance in a treacherous project he had formed to shake off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and violate the homage and fealty he had sworn to him.

For this God by the prophet here:

- I. Threatens the ruin of him and his kingdom, by a parable of two eagles and a vine (v. 1–10), and the explanation of that parable (v. 11–21). But, in the close,
- II. He promises hereafter to raise the royal family of Judah again, the house of David, in the Messiah and his kingdom (v. 22–24).

CHAPTER 18

Perhaps, in reading some of the foregoing chapters, we may have been tempted to think ourselves not much concerned in them (though they also were written for our learning). But this chapter, at first view, appears highly and nearly to concern us all, very highly, very nearly; for, without particular reference to Judah and Jerusalem. It lays down the rule of judgment according to which God will deal with the children of men in determining them to their everlasting state, and it agrees with that very ancient rule laid down, Gen. 4:7, "*If though does well, shall thou not be accepted?*"

But, "if not, sin," the punishment of sin, "lies at the door."

Here is

- I. The corrupt proverb used by the profane Jews, which gave occasion to the message here sent them, and made it necessary for the justifying of God in his dealings with them (v. 1-3).
- II. The reply given to this proverb, in which God asserts in general his own sovereignty and justice (v. 4). Woe to the wicked; it shall be ill with them (v. 4, 20). But say to the righteous, It shall be ill with them (v. 4, 20). But say to the righteous, It shall be well with them (v. 5-9). In particular, as to the case complained of, he assures us:
 - ❖ That it shall be ill with a wicked man, though he had a good father (v. 10–13).
 - ❖ That it shall be well with a good man, though he had a wicked father (v. 14–18). And therefore in this God is righteous (v. 19, 20).
 - ❖ That it shall be well with penitents, though they began ever so ill (v. 21–23 and 27, 28).
 - ❖ That it shall be ill with apostates, though they began ever so well (v. 24, 26). And the use of all this is
 - To justify God and clear the equity of all his proceedings (v. 25, 29).
 - To engage and encourage us to repent of our sins and turn to God (v. 30–32). And these are things, which belong to our everlasting peace. O that we may understand and regard them before they be hidden from our eyes!

CHAPTER 19

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the 17th, to foretell and lament the ruin of the house of David, the royal family of Judah, in the calamitous exit of the four sons and grandsons of Josiah—Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, in whom that illustrious line of kings was cut off, which the prophet is here ordered to lament (v. 1).

And he does it by similitude:

- I. The kingdom of Judah and house of David are here compared to a lioness, and those princes to lions, that were fierce and ravenous, but were hunted down and taken in nets (v. 2-9).
- II. That kingdom and that house are here compared to a vine, and these princes to branches, which had been strong and flourishing, but were now broken off and burnt (v. 10–14). This ruin of that monarchy was now in the doing, and this lamentation of it was

intended to affect the people with it, that they might not flatter themselves with vain hopes of the lengthening out of their tranquility.

CHAPTER 20

In this chapter:

- I. The prophet is consulted by some of the elders of Israel (v. 1).
- II. His God instructs him what answer to give them. He must:
 - ❖ Signify God's displeasure against them (v. 2, 3).
 - ❖ He must show them what just basis he had for that displeasure, by giving them a history of God's grateful dealings with their fathers and their treacherous dealings with God.
 - In Egypt (v. 5-9).
 - In the wilderness (v. 10-26).
 - In Canaan (v. 27-32).
 - ❖ He must denounce the judgments of God against them (v. 33-36).
 - ❖ He must tell them likewise what mercy God had in store for them, when he would bring a remnant of them to repentance, re-establish them in their own land, and set up his sanctuary among them again (v. 37-44).
 - ❖ Here is another word dropped towards Jerusalem, which is explained and enlarged upon in the next chapter (v. 45-49).

CHAPTER 21

In this chapter we have:

- I. An explication of the prophecy in the close of the foregoing chapter concerning the fire in the forest, which the people complained they could not understand (v. 1-5), with directions to the prophet to show himself deeply affected with it (v. 6, 7).
- II. A further prediction of the sword that was coming upon the land, by which all should be laid waste; and this expressed very emphatically (v. 8-17).
- III. A prospect given of the king of Babylon's approach to Jerusalem, to which he was determined by divination (v. 18-24).
- IV. Sentence passed upon Zedekiah king of Judah (v. 25-27).
- V. The destruction of the Ammonites by the sword foretold (v. 28-32). Thus is this chapter all threatening.

CHAPTER 22

Here are three separate messages which God entrusts the prophet to deliver concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and all to the same purport, to show them their sins and the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins.

- I. Here is a catalogue of their sins, by which they had exposed themselves to shame and for which God would bring them to ruin (v. 1-16).
- II. They are here compared to dross, and are condemned as dross to the fire (v. 17-22).
- III. All orders and degrees of men among them are here found guilty of the neglect of the duty of their place and of having contributed to the national guilt, which therefore, since none appeared as intercessors, they must all expect to share in the punishment of (v. 23-31).

CHAPTER 23

This long chapter (as before chapter 16 and 20) is a history of the apostasies of God's people from him and the aggravations of those apostasies under the similitude of corporal harlotry and

adultery. Here the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the ten tribes and the two, with their capital cities, Samaria and Jerusalem, are considered distinctly.

Here is:

- I. The apostasy of Israel and Samaria from God (v. 1-8) and their ruin for it (v. 9, 10).
- II. The apostasy of Judah and Jerusalem from God (v. 11-21) and sentence passed upon them, that they shall in like manner be destroyed for it (v. 22-35).
- III. The joint wickedness of them both together (v. 36-44) and the joint ruin of them both (v. 45-49). And all that is written for warning against the sins of idolatry, and confidence in an arm of flesh, and sinful leagues and confederacies with wicked people (which are the sins here meant by committing whoredom), is that others may hear and fear, and not sin after the similitude of the transgressions of Israel and Judah.

CHAPTER 24

Here are two sermons in this chapter, preached on a particular occasion, and they are both from Mount Sinai, the mount of terror, both from Mount Ebal, the mount of curses; both speak the approaching fate of Jerusalem. The occasion of them was the king of Babylon's laying siege to Jerusalem, and the design of them is to show that in the issue of that siege he should be not only master of the place, but destroyer of it.

- I. By the sign of flesh boiling in a pot over the fire are shown the miseries that Jerusalem should suffer during the siege, and justly, for her filthiness (v. 1-14).
- II. By the sign of Ezekiel's not mourning for the death of his wife is shown that the calamities coming upon Jerusalem were too great to be lamented, so great that they should sink down under them into a silent despair (v. 15-27).

CHAPTER 25

Judgment began at the house of God, and therefore with them the prophets began, who were the judges; but it must not end there, and therefore they must not. Ezekiel had finished his testimony, which related to the destruction of Jerusalem. As to that he was ordered to say no more, but stand upon his watchtower and wait the issue. Yet he must not be silent; there are divers nations bordering upon the land of Israel, which he must prophesy against, as Isaiah and Jeremiah had done before, and must proclaim God's controversy with them, chiefly for the injuries and indignities which they had done to the people of God in the day of their calamity.

In this chapter we have his prophecy

- I. Against the Ammonites (v. 1-7).
- II. Against the Moabites (v. 8-11).
- III. Against the Edomites (v. 11-14).
- IV. Against the Philistines (v. 15-17). That which is laid to the charge of each of them is their barbarous and insolent conduct towards God's Israel, for which God threatens to put the same cup of trembling into their hand. God's resenting it thus would be an encouragement to Israel to believe that though he had dealt thus severely with them yet he had not cast them off, but would still own them and plead their cause.

CHAPTER 26

The prophet had soon done with those four nations that he set his face against in the foregoing chapters; for they were not at that time very considerable in the world, nor would their fall make any great noise among the nations nor any figure in history.

But the city of Tyre is next set to the bar; this, being a place of vast trade, was known the entire world over; and therefore here are three whole chapters, this and the two that follow, spent in the prediction of the destruction of Tyre. We have "*the burden of Tyre*," (Isaiah 23). It is but just mentioned in Jeremiah, as sharing with the natives in the common calamity, 25:22; 27:3; 47:4.

But Ezekiel is ordered to be copious upon that head. In this chapter we have:

- I. The sin charged upon Tyre, which was triumphing in the destruction of Jerusalem (v. 2).
- II. The destruction of Tyrus itself foretold.
 - ❖ The extremity of this destruction: it shall be utterly ruined (v. 4–6, 12-14).
 - ❖ The instruments of this destruction, many nations (v. 3), and the king of Babylon by name with his vast victorious army (v. 7–11).
 - ❖ The great surprise that this should give to the neighboring nations, who would all wonder at the fall of so great a city and be alarmed at it (v. 15–21).

CHAPTER 27

Still we are attending the funeral of Tyre and the lamentations made for the fall of that renowned city. In this chapter we have:

- I. A large account of the dignity, wealth, and splendor of Tyre, while it was in its strength, the vast trade it drove, and the interest it had among the nations (v. 1–25), which is designed to make its ruin the more lamentable.
- II. A prediction of its fall and ruin, and the confusion and consternation which all its neighbors shall thereby be put into (v. 26–36). This is intended to stain the pride of all worldly glory, and, by setting the one over-against the other, to let us see the vanity and uncertainty of the riches, honors. Pleasures of the world, and what little reason we have to place our happiness in them or to be confident of the continuance of them; so that all this is written for our learning.

CHAPTER 28

In this chapter we have:

- I. A prediction of the fall and ruin of the king of Tyre, who, in the destruction of that city, is particularly set up as a mark for God's arrows (v. 1–10).
- II. A lamentation for the king of Tyre, when he has thus fallen, though he falls by his own iniquity (v. 11–19).
- III. A prophecy of the destruction of Zidon, which as in the neighborhood of Tyre and had a dependence upon it (v. 20–23).
- IV. A promise of the restoration of the Israel of God, though in the day of their calamity they were insulted over by their neighbors (v. 24–26).

CHAPTER 29

Three chapters we had concerning Tyre and its king; next follow four chapters concerning Egypt and its king. This is the first of them. Egypt had formerly been a house of bondage to God's people; of late they had had but too friendly a correspondence with it, and had depended too much upon it. Therefore, whether the prediction reached Egypt or no, it would be of use to Israel, to take them off from their confidence in their alliance with it.

The prophecies against Egypt, which are all laid together in these four chapters, were of five several dates; the first in the 10th year of the captivity (v. 1), the second in the 27th (v. 17), the third in the 11th year and the first month (30:20), the fourth in the 11th year and the third month (31:1), the fifth in the 12th year (32:1), and another in the same year (v. 17).

In this chapter we have,

- I. The destruction of Pharaoh foretold, for his dealing deceitfully with Israel (v. 1-7).
- II. The desolation of the land of Egypt foretold (v. 8–12).
- III. A promise of the restoration thereof, in part, after forty years (v. 13–16).
- IV. The possession that should be given to Nebuchadnezzar of the land of Egypt (v. 17–20).
- V. A promise of mercy to Israel (v. 21).

CHAPTER 30

In this chapter we have

- I. A continuation of the prophecy against Egypt, which we had in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, just before the desolation of that once flourishing kingdom was completed by Nebuchadnezzar, in which is foretold the destruction of all her allies and confederates, all her interests and concerns, and the several steps which the king of Babylon should take in pushing on this destruction (v. 1–19).
- II. A repetition of a former prophecy against Egypt, just before the desolation of it begun by their own bad conduct, which gradually weakened them and prepared the way for the king of Babylon (v. 20–26). It is all much to the same purport with what we had before.

CHAPTER 31

The prophecy of this chapter, as the two chapters before, is against Egypt, and designed for the humbling and mortifying of Pharaoh. In passing sentence upon great criminals it is usual to consult precedents, and to see what has been done to others in the like case, which serves both to direct and to justify the proceedings. Pharaoh stands indicted at the bar of divine justice for his pride and haughtiness, and the injuries he had done to God's people; but he thinks himself so high, so great, as not to be accountable to any authority, so strong, and so well guarded, as not to be conquerable by any force. The prophet is therefore directed to make a report to him of the case of the king of Assyria, whose head city was Nineveh.

- I. He must show him how great a monarch the king of Assyria had been, what a vast empire he had, what a mighty sway he bore; the king of Egypt, great as he was could not go beyond him (v. 3-9).
- II. He must then show him how like he was to the king of Assyria in pride and carnal security (v. 10).
- III. He must next read him the history of the fall and ruin of the king of Assyria, what a noise it made among the nations and what a warning it gave to all potent princes to take heed of pride (v. 11–17).
- IV. He must leave the king of Egypt to apply all this to himself, to see his own face in the looking-glass of the king of Assyria's sin, and to foresee his own fall through the perspective glass of his ruin (v. 18).

CHAPTER 32

Still we are upon the destruction of Pharaoh and Egypt, which is wonderfully enlarged upon, and with a great deal of emphasis. When we read so very much of Egypt's ruin, no less than six several prophecies at diverse times delivered concerning it, we are ready to think, Surely there is some special reason for it.

- I. Perhaps it may look as far back as the book of Genesis, where we find (15:14) that God determined to judge Egypt for oppressing his people; and, though that was in part fulfilled in the plagues of Egypt and the drowning of Pharaoh, yet, in this destruction, here foretold, those old scores were reckoned for, and that was to have its full accomplishment.

- II. Perhaps it may look as far forward as the book of the Revelation, where we find that the great enemy of the gospel-church, that makes war with the Lamb, is spiritually called Egypt (Revelations 11:8). And, if so, the destruction of Egypt and its Pharaoh was a type of the destruction of that proud enemy; and between this prophecy of the ruin of Egypt and the prophecy of the destruction of the antichristian generation there is some analogy. We have two distinct prophecies in this chapter relating to Egypt, both in the same month, one on the 1st day, the other that day fortnight, probably both on the Sabbath day. They are both lamentations, not only to signify how lamentable the fall of Egypt should be, but also to intimate how much the prophet himself should lament it, from a generous principle of love to mankind. The destruction of Egypt is here represented under two similitude:
- ❖ The killing of a lion, or a whale, or some such devouring creature (v. 1-16).
 - ❖ The funeral of a great commander or captain-general (v. 17-32). The two prophecies of this chapter are much of the same length.

CHAPTER 33

The prophet has now come off his circuit, which he went as judge, in God's name, to try and pass sentence upon the neighboring nations, and, having finished with them, and read them all their doom, in the eight chapters foregoing, he now returns to the children of his people, and receives further instructions what to say to them.

- I. He must let them know what office he was in among them as a prophet, that he was a watchman, and had received a charge concerning them, for which he was accountable (v. 1-9). The substance of this we had before, 3:17, etc.
- II. He must let them know upon what terms they stand with God, that they are upon their trial, upon their good behavior, that if a wicked man repent he shall not perish, but that if a righteous man apostatize he shall perish (v. 10-20).
- III. Here is a particular message sent to those who yet remained in the land of Israel, and (which is very strange) grew secure there, and confident that they should take root there again, to tell them that their hopes would fail them because they persisted in their sins (v. 21-29).
- IV. Here is a rebuke to those who personally attended Ezekiel's ministry, but were not sincere in their professions of devotion (v. 30-33).

CHAPTER 34

The iniquities and calamities of God's Israel had been largely and pathetically lamented before, in this book. Now in this chapter the shepherds of Israel, their rulers both in church and state, are called to an account, as having been very much accessory to the sin and ruin of Israel, by their neglecting to do the duty of their place.

Here is:

- I. A high charge exhibited against them for their negligence, their unskillfulness, and unfaithfulness in the management of public affairs (v. 1-6 and v. 8).
- II. Their discharge from their trust, for their insufficiency and treachery (v. 7-10).
- III. A gracious promise that God would take care of his flock, though they did not, and that it should not always suffer as it had done by their mal-administrations (v. 11-16).
- IV. Another charge exhibited against those of the flock that were fat and strong, for the injuries they did to those that were weak and feeble (v. 17-22).
- V. Another promise that God would in the fullness of time send the Messiah, to be the great and good Shepherd of the sheep, who should redress all grievances and set every thing to rights with the flock (v. 23-31).

CHAPTER 35

It was promised, in the foregoing chapter, that when the time to favor Zion, yea, the set time, should come, especially the time for sending the Messiah and setting up his kingdom in the world, God would cause the enemies of his church to cease and the blessings and comforts of the church to abound. This chapter enlarges upon the former promise, concerning the destruction of the enemies of the church; the next chapter upon the latter promise, the replenishing of the church with blessings. Mount Seir (that is, Edom) is the enemy prophesied against in this chapter, but fitly put here, as in the prophecy of Obadiah, for all the enemies of the church. For, as those all walked in the way of Cain that hated Abel, so those all walked in the way of Esau who hated Jacob, but over whom Jacob, by virtue of a particular blessing, was to have dominion.

Now here we have

- I. The sin charged upon the Edomites, and that was their spite and malice to Israel (v. 5, 10–13).
- II. The ruin threatened, that should come upon them for this sin. God will be against them (v. 3) and then their country shall be laid waste (v. 4), depopulated, and made quite desolate (v. 6-9), and left so when other nations that had been wasted should recover themselves (v. 14, 15).

CHAPTER 36

We have done with Mount Seir, and left it desolate, and likely to continue so, and must now turn ourselves, with the prophet, to the mountains of Israel, which we find desolate too, but hope before we have done with the chapter to leave in better plight.

Here are two distinct prophecies in this chapter:

- I. Here is one that seems chiefly to relate to the temporal estate of the Jews, wherein their present deplorable condition is described and the triumphs of their neighbors in it; but it is promised that their grievances shall be all redressed and that in due time they shall be settled again in their own land, in the midst of peace and plenty (v. 1–15).
- II. Here is another that seems chiefly to concern their spiritual estate, wherein they are reminded of their former sins and God's judgments upon them, to humble them for their sins and under God's mighty hand (v. 16–20). But it is promised:
 - ❖ That God would glorify himself in showing mercy to them (v. 21–24).
 - ❖ That he would sanctify them, by giving them his grace and fitting them for his service; and this for his own name's sake and in answer to their prayers (v. 25–38).

CHAPTER 37

The threats of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, which we had in the former part of this book, were not so terrible. But the promises of their restoration and deliverance for the glory of God, which we have here in the latter part of the book, are as comfortable. As those were illustrated with many visions and similitude, for the awakening of a holy fear, so are these, for the encouraging of a humble faith.

God had assured them, in the foregoing chapter, that he would gather the house of Israel, even all of it, and would bring them out of their captivity, and return them to their own land; but there were two things that rendered this very unlikely:

- I. That they were so dispersed among their enemies, so destitute of all helps and advantages which might favor or further their return, and so dispirited likewise in their

own minds; upon all these accounts they are here, in vision. Compared to a valley full of the dry bones of dead men, which should be brought together and raised to life. The vision of this we have (v. 1–10) and the explication of it, with its application to the present case (v. 11–14).

- II. That they were so divided among themselves, too much of the old enmity between Judah and Ephraim remaining even in their captivity. But, as to this, by a sign of two sticks made one in the hand of the prophet is fore shown the happy coalition that should be, at their return, between the two nations of Israel and Judah (v. 15–22). In this there was a type of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, Jews and Samaritans, in Christ and his church. And so the prophet slides into a prediction of the kingdom of Christ, which should be set up in the world with God's tabernacle in it, and of the glories and graces of that kingdom (v. 23–28).

CHAPTER 38

This chapter, and that which follows it, are concerning Gog and Magog, a powerful enemy to the people of Israel, that should make a formidable descent upon them. Put them into a consternation, but their army should be routed and their design defeated; and this prophecy. It is most probable, had its accomplishment some time after the return of the people of Israel out of their captivity, whether in the struggles they had with the kings of Syria, especially Antiochus Epiphanes, or perhaps in some other way not recorded, we cannot tell.

If the sacred history of the Old Testament had reached as far as the prophecy, we should have been better able to understand these chapters, but, for want of that key, we are locked out of the meaning of them. God had by the prophet assured his people of happy times after their return to their own land. But lest they should mistake the promises which related to the kingdom of the Messiah and the spiritual privileges of that the kingdom of the Messiah and the spiritual privileges of that kingdom. As if from them they might promise themselves an uninterrupted temporal prosperity, he here tells them, as Christ told his disciples to prevent the like mistake, that in the world they shall have tribulation, but they may be of good cheer, for they shall be victorious at last.

This prophecy here of Gog and Magog is without doubt alluded to in that prophecy which relates to the latter days, and which seems to be yet unfulfilled (Revelations 20:8). That Gog and Magog shall be gathered to battle against the camp of the saints, as the Old-Testament prophecies of the destruction of Babylon are alluded to, Rev. 18. But, in both, the Old Testament prophecies had their accomplishment in the Jewish church as the New-Testament prophecies shall have when the time comes in the Christian church.

In this chapter we have intermixed

- I. The attempt that Gog and Magog should make upon the land of Israel, the vast army they should bring into the field, and their vast preparations (v. 4-7), their project and design in it (v. 8–13), God's hand in it (v. 4).
- II. The great terror that this should strike upon the land of Israel (v. 15, 16, 18–20).
- III. The divine restraint that these enemies should be under, and the divine protection that Israel should be under (v. 2-4 and v. 14).
- IV. The defeat that should be given to those enemies by the immediate hand of God (v. 21–23), which we shall hear more of in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 39

This chapter continues and concludes the prophecy against Gog and Magog, in whose destruction God crowns his favor to his people Israel, which shines very brightly after the scattering of that black cloud in the close of this chapter.

Here is:

- I. An express prediction of the utter destruction of Gog and Magog, agreeing with what we had before (v. 1-7).
- II. An illustration of the vastness of that destruction, in three consequences of it: the burning of their weapons (v. 8-10), the burning of their slain (v. 11-16), and the feasting of the fowls with the dead bodies of those that were unburied (v. 17-22).
- III. A declaration of God's gracious purposes concerning his people Israel, in this and his other providence concerning them, and a promise of further mercy that he had yet in store for them (v. 23-29).

CHAPTER 40

The waters of the sanctuary, which this prophet saw in vision (47:1), are a proper representation of this prophecy. Hitherto the waters have been sometimes but to the ankles, in other places to the knees, or to the loins, but now the waters have risen, and have become "*a river which cannot be passed over.*"

Here is one continued vision, beginning at this chapter, to the end of the book, which is justly looked upon to be one of the most difficult portions of scripture in the entire book of God. The Jews will not allow any to read it till they are thirty years old, and tell those who do read it that, though they cannot understand every thing in it, "*when Elias comes he will explain it.*" Many commentators, both ancient and modern, have owned themselves at a loss what to make of it and what use to make of it.

But because it is hard to be understood we must not therefore throw it by, but humbly search concerning it, get as far as we can into it and as much as we can out of it. When we despair of satisfaction in every difficulty we meet with, bless God that our salvation does not depend upon it, but that things necessary are plain enough, and wait till God shall reveal even this unto us. These chapters are the more to be regarded because the last two chapters of the Revelation seem to have a plain allusion to them, as Rev. 20 has to the foregoing prophecy of Gog and Magog.

Here is the vision of a glorious temple (in this chapter and chapter 41 and 42), of God's taking possession of it (chapter 43), orders concerning the priests that are to minister in this temple (chapter 44), the division of the land, what portion should be allotted for the sanctuary, what for the city, and what for the prince, both in his government of the people and his worship of God (chapter. 45), and further instructions for him and the people, chapter 46.

After the vision of the holy waters we have the borders of the holy land, and the portions assigned to the tribes, and the dimensions and gates of the holy city, chapter 47, 48. Some make this to represent what had been during the flourishing state of the Jewish church, how glorious Solomon's temple was in its best days, that the captives might see what they had lost by sin and might be the more humbled. But that seems not probable.

The general scope of it I take to be:

1. To assure the captives that they should not only return to their own land, and be settled there, which had been often promised in the foregoing chapters, but that they should have,

and therefore should be encouraged to build, another temple, which God would own, and where he would meet them and bless them, that the ordinances of worship should be revived, and the sacred priesthood should there attend. Though they should not have a king to live in such splendor as formerly, yet they should have a prince or ruler (who is often spoken of in this vision), who should countenance the worship of God among them and should himself be an example of diligent attendance upon it; and that prince, priests, and people, should have a very comfortable settlement and subsistence in their own land.

2. To direct them to look further than all this, and to expect the coming of the Messiah, who had before been prophesied of under the name of David because he was the man that projected the building of the temple and that should set up a spiritual temple, even the gospel-church, the glory of which should far exceed that of Solomon's temple, and which should continue to the end of time. The dimensions of these visionary buildings being so large (the new temple more spacious than all the old Jerusalem and the new Jerusalem of greater extent than all the land of Canaan) plainly intimates, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, that these things cannot be literally, but must spiritually, understood. At the gospel-temple, erected by Christ and his apostles, was so closely connected with the second material temple, was erected so carefully just at the time when that fell into decay, that it might be ready to receive its glories when it resigned them, that it was proper enough that they should both be referred to in one and the same vision. Under the type and figure of a temple and altar, priests and sacrifices, is foreshown the spiritual worship that should be performed in gospel times, more agreeable to the nature both of God and man, and that perfected at last in the kingdom of glory, in which perhaps these visions will have their full accomplishment, and some think in some happy and glorious state of the gospel-church on this side heaven, in the latter days.

In this chapter we have:

- I. A general account of this vision of the temple and city (v. 1-4).
- II. A particular account of it entered upon; and a description given
 - ❖ Of the outside wall (v. 5).
 - ❖ Of the east gate (v. 6–19).
 - ❖ Of the north gate (v. 20–23).
 - ❖ Of the south gate (v. 24–31) and the chambers and other appurtenances belonging to these gates.
 - ❖ Of the inner court, both towards the east and towards the south (v. 32–38).
 - ❖ Of the tables (v. 39–43). 7. Of the lodgings for the singers and the priests (v. 44–47). 8. Of the porch of the house (v. 48, 49).

CHAPTER 41

An account was given of the porch of the house in the close of the foregoing chapter; this brings us to the temple itself, the description of which here given creates much difficulty to the critical expositors and occasions differences among them. Those must consult them who are nice in their inquiries into the meaning of the particulars of this delineation; it shall suffice us to observe

- I. The dimensions of the house, the posts of it (v. 1), the door (v. 2), the wall and the side-chambers (v. 5, 6), the foundations and wall of the chambers, their doors (v. 8–11), and the house itself (v. 13).
- II. The dimensions of the oracle, or most holy place (v. 3, 4).
- III. An account of another building over against the separate place (v. 12–15).
- IV. The manner of the building of the house (v. 7, 16, 17).
- V. The ornaments of the house (v. 18–20).
- VI. The altar of incense and the table (v. 22).

- VII. The doors between the temple and the oracle (v. 23–26). There is so much difference both in the terms and in the rules of architecture between one age and another, one place and another, that it ought not to be any stumbling-block to us that there is so much in these descriptions dark and hard to be understood, about the meaning of which the learned are not agreed. To one not skilled in mathematics the mathematical description of a modern structure would be scarcely intelligible; and yet to a common carpenter or mason among the Jews at that time we may suppose that all this, in the literal sense of it, was easy enough.

CHAPTER 42

This chapter continues and concludes the describing and measuring of this mystical temple, which it is very hard to understand the particular architecture of, and yet more hard to comprehend the mystical meaning of.

Here is

- I. A description of the chambers that were about the courts, their situation and structure (v. 1–13), and the uses for which they were designed (v. 13, 14).
- II. A survey of the whole compass of ground which was taken up with the house, and the courts belonging to it (v. 15–20).

CHAPTER 43

The prophet, having given us a view of the mystical temple, the gospel-church, as he received it from the Lord, that it might appear not to be erected in vain, comes to describe, in this and the next chapter, the worship that should be performed in it, but under the type of the Old-Testament services.

In this chapter we have:

- I. Possession taken of this temple, by the glory of God filling it (v. 1-6).
- II. A promise given of the continuance of God's presence with his people upon condition of their return to, and continuance in, the instituted way of worship, and their abandoning idols and idolatry (v. 7–12).
- III. A description of the altar of burnt offerings (v. 13–17). IV. Directions given for the consecration of that altar (v. 18–27). Ezekiel seems here to stand between God and Israel, as Moses the servant of the Lord did when the sanctuary was first set up.

CHAPTER 44

In this chapter we have:

- I. The appropriating of the east gate of the temple to the prince (v. 1-3).
- II. A reproof sent to the house of Israel for their former profanation of God's sanctuary, with a charge to them to be more strict for the future (v. 4-9).
- III. The degrading of those Levites that had formerly been guilty of idolatry and the establishing of the priesthood in the family of Zadok, which had kept their integrity (v. 10–16).
- IV. Divers laws and ordinances concerning the priests (v. 17–31).

CHAPTER 45

In this chapter is further represented to the prophet, in vision:

- I. The division of the holy land, so much for the temple, and the priests that attended the service of it (v. 1-4), so much for the Levites (v. 5), so much for the city (v. 6), so much for the prince, and the residue to the people (v. 7, 8).
- II. The ordinances of justice that were given both to prince and people (v. 9–12).

- III. The oblations they were to offer, and the prince's part in those oblations (v. 13–17). Particularly in the beginning of the year (v. 18–20) and in the Passover, and the feast of tabernacles (v. 21–25). And all this seems to point at the new church-state that should be set up under the gospel, which, both for extent and for purity, should far exceed that of the Old Testament.

CHAPTER 46

In this chapter we have:

- I. Some further rules given both to the priests and to the people, relating to their worship (v. 1–15).
- II. A law concerning the prince's disposal of his inheritance (v. 16–18).
- III. A description of the places provided for the boiling of the sacrifices and the baking of the meat-offerings (v. 19–24).

CHAPTER 47

In this chapter we have:

- I. The vision of the holy waters, their rise, extent, depth, and healing virtue, the plenty of fish in them, and an account of the trees growing on the banks of them (v. 1–12).
- II. An appointment of the borders of the land of Canaan, which was to be divided by lot to the tribes of Israel and the strangers that sojourned among them (v. 13–23).

CHAPTER 48

In this chapter we have particular directions given for the distribution of the land, of which we had the metes and bounds assigned in the foregoing chapter.

- I. The portions of the twelve tribes, seven to the north of the sanctuary (v. 1–7) and five to the south (v. 23–29).
- II. The allotment of land for the sanctuary, and the priests (v. 8–11), for the Levites (v. 12–14), for the city (v. 15–20), and for the prince (v. 21, 22). Much of this we had before, chapter 45.
- III. A plan of the city, its gates, and the new name given to it (v. 30–35), which seals up, and concludes, the vision and prophecy of this book.

Lecture 5: The Holy Book of the Prophet of Daniel

Introduction

Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel the prophet but younger in age. Ezekiel offers us the temple of Jerusalem, which, due to corruption, saw desolation. Furthermore, Ezekiel saw with the spirit of prophecy, not only the return from captivity but also the erection of a new temple, the temple of the New Testament from which divine grace flows. However, Daniel also offers us the return from captivity, and also the encounter with the true Liberator, the Lord Jesus Christ, who can liberate us from the bondage of sin and allow us to enter into His glories. Moreover, Daniel shows that Jesus Christ opens the eyes of our hearts to see Him coming at the end of ages to form, from his believers, shining stars in His image. These two captive prophets agreed to reveal God's care for His believers, assuring them that He will never forget them, no matter how long the period in which He seems distant is.

Daniel's unique character

- He was a prophet occupied with administration. However, he knew how not to mix his administrative duties with his prophetic spiritual work. His position in administration did not make him lose his heavenly vision and his concern for the salvation of his soul and the salvation of his people the kings with whom he dealt. His high position in the largest pagan empire did not prevent him from witnessing to the true God and from keeping His commandments. He did so with a spirit of wisdom, love and courage.
- He served his people, not with the spirit of fanaticism, but with the spirit of holiness and humility, with love to all people. He supported them in the land of captivity where he found grace in the eyes of the kings, and also opened the doors of hope before the captive people and all the Gentiles.
- God granted him, by the Holy Spirit, the gift of seeing the future.
- He is the father of the history of the Gentiles. He recorded many precise prophecies about the kingdoms which follow one another, through God's plan. The book of Daniel is the only book in the Old Testament which prophesies in detail about kings and kingdoms, which he declares by name such as Persia and Greece.
- He is the prophet of dreams and visions, who enjoyed a divine gift, a heavenly wisdom, and a surpassing understanding.
- He is the prophet who revealed the times for the events of salvation, the end of the world, and was occupied with the times of the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus called him "Daniel the prophet" (Matthew 24:15), because of his frequent prophecies. The book of Daniel is most frequently studied Old Testament book in the Christian Church.
- He was a man of wisdom, who was granted the gift of explaining dreams by the Spirit of God. A pagan king told him, "...I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you..." (Dan.4:9). Furthermore, Ezekiel refers to Daniel, Noah, and Job as the most righteous of men of God (Ezekiel 14: 14,20).

- Josephus, the Jewish historian, mentioned that Daniel was very skillful in architecture. Daniel is the one who designed the building of the famous tower of Shushan in Persia, where the kings of Persia lived. Probably, he was born in Jerusalem, and was captive in Babylon like Ezekiel (Dan. 1:1-2).

Part One

The Historical Side: Chapters 1 - 6

In this part, the Holy Spirit presents a true picture of the practical faith in the life of Daniel and his companions in Babylon, during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus.

Chapter 1

Strangers in the Palace

Judah was made captive in three stages. This period until the end of the captivity was the darkest period for all the people in that region. They lived in humiliation, strangers from their country, deprived of their group worship in the temple, and lost all dignity in the eyes of the Gentiles. However, during this darkness, Daniel and his three companions were like shining lights. God took care of them and used them for His kingdom as witnesses for the truth throughout all the generations.

Outline:

1. The youth in the captivity: verses 1-4
2. Their choice to serve the king: verses 5-7
3. Their rejection to the king's delicacies: verses 8-14
4. The result of the test: verses 15-16
5. Their enjoyment of wisdom and understanding: 17
6. They surpass all the wise men verses 18-21

Nebuchadnezzar, the king, renamed Daniel "**Beltshazzar**", which means "**Baal's prince**". Baal was the main god to whom the Babylonians worshiped. He renamed Hananiah "**Shadrach**", which means "**Inspired by the god of the sun**" and renamed Mishael "**Meshach**", which means "**Through Shak**", because the Babylonians worshipped Venus, under the name Shak. He was the god of beauty and earth. Nebuchadnezzar renamed Azariah "**Abed-Nego**" which means "**the god of fire**". The king may have changed their names, but was unable to change their hearts and their holy natures in the Lord.

In Daniel's fast, he not only abstained from food, but also he "purposed in his heart" (v.8) Spiritual life is enjoying an inner treasure, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt.6:21) Thus, a true spiritual life stems from the depth of the heart, even during the temptation.

Daniel asked the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself, by eating of the king's food. This request was considered impossible, because it would put the eunuch in trouble and may even cost him his life because of his disobedience to the king. However, Daniel believed that God is the Lord of the impossible, who can work in the heart of this pagan man, to protect the sanctity of his life and his purity.

Daniel and his friends fasted for ten days; thus the Lord rewarded them ten times. He gave them a better countenance and became in much better health than all the others. This was a gift from God, for it is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." (Deut. 8:3). Furthermore, God gave these four men knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom.

Chapter 2

The Vision of the Statue

It is very hard to express the feelings of Daniel and his three friends. God truly was glorified in them, and He gave them grace in the eyes of the king. The king considered them wiser than all the other Chaldeans. God wanted to assure Daniel that all what had happened to him was not coincidence and that He was in control. God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to see a terrifying dream that no one was able to interpret. God, however, revealed the dream's meaning to Daniel. The interpretation of this dream can be summarized in one statement, that "God controls history and is concerned about the salvation of the world." God wanted to reveal to Nebuchadnezzar and all the people that Daniel was distinguished with the spirit of prophecy, clarifying that God's mercy was working in him.

The history of the Dream

"Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him." (v.1)

St. Jerome said: "What he means by the second year is that he reigned not only over the Jews and Chaldeans, but on all the other Gentiles such as the Assyrians and Egypt. Josephus said that Nebuchadnezzar dreamt a strange dream about the future after his victory over Egypt."

It is mentioned that he dreamt dreams, in the plural form, although he had only one dream. The plural form is used either because the dream had many subjects or many dreams on different intervals with the same interpretation.

These dreams are examples of God's work in secret for the benefit of His believers. Tertullian the scholar differentiated among three kinds of dreams:

- Dreams from the devil: which may be seen true and beneficial, yet they are deceiving.
- Dreams from God: as what had happened with Nebuchadnezzar the pagan, and that was to show God's great mercy for all the human race.
- Dreams which are natural in one's daily life: which are mostly as reaction to one's behavior. At night, after the day's work, one remembers the events of the day.

"Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king." (v.2) "And the king said to them, I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream.

The Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, "O king live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation." (v.3,4)

However when they made aware that the king had forgotten the dream "The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore, no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer or Chaldean." (v.10)

They presented a just excuse to the king, that no one could ever interpret what he was asking, and that this had never happened in the history of mankind. Thus, everyone had witnessed that if anyone could interpret that dream, it would be a divine gift from God, for God is the only One who can interpret dreams and inner thoughts. They had witnessed for the God of Daniel, before Daniel even uttered a word about God.

“For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon” (v.12).

The king was not comforted from the answer of the wise men, but rather he became very furious. His threats increased to a royal order to kill all the wise men of Babylon.

The verdict to kill Daniel did not worry him because he felt that his life, his heart, and his thoughts were all under God’s control and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He asked the king to give him some time so that God may reveal to him the secret. He knew that this request was risky, for if he would not know the answer, then his punishment would be multiplied. Then Daniel went to his house and told Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon” (v.16-18).

God had allowed Daniel to go through this tribulation so that he may meet Him. This experience allowed Daniel to lift his heart and thoughts up to heaven, to discover deeper secrets, and to enjoy the knowledge which swallows all difficulties. We are in dire need to go to our house, the inner Jerusalem to meet the One who transfers us from the cares of this world to the deposit of the eternity.

“Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.” (19)

“Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said to him, “I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation.” (v.25)

“The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?” (v. 26). Daniel answered in the presence of the king and said, “The secret which the king has demanded the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers I cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these” (v.26-28).

“You, O king, were watching; and behold a great image! This great image whose splendor was excellent, stood before you, and its form was awesome.” (v.31)“The image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.” (v.32,33)

“It is you O king who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens and your dominion to the end of the earth.” (Dan. 4:22) Nebuchadnezzar was a great king and leader, he was a genius and an architect; his dominion was unlimited. · The divine inspiration symbolized the king and his kingdom with gold, which was a symbol of greatness,

The kingdoms of Medes and Persians were symbolized with silver. Then he called the kingdom of the Macedonians which dominated the world “bronze”. “And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters all things; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed

with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.” (40-43)

.The strange stone

· “You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.” (v.34,35)

The most important thing in the dream was this strange stone which was able to crush the kingdoms to establish a spiritual kingdom that fills the earth—a kingdom which lasts forever. Here, he talks about a new kingdom which the stone without hands will establish. It is referring to the Lord Jesus who was incarnate from a virgin. Without hands refer to the kingdom being heavenly without beginning.

The glorified Daniel

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him.” (v. 46)

“Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon.” (v.48)

Daniel petitioned the king and set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king’s palace as a chief, so that he may observe everyone who moves and enters the palace. He probably had the responsibility of the judiciary affairs in the palace, where the custom was to put the courts at the door of the palace. Daniel and his friends did not desire any temporal matters, but rather desired the kingdom of God and its righteousness. God gave them more than what they expected-- the temporal and the heavenly gifts.

Chapter 3

God talked to Nebuchadnezzar through the language of dreams, for his spirit was troubled (Dan.2:3). Daniel interpreted the dream for him, warning him from pride, for he became like a golden head (Dan. 2:8) to a metal image which is destroyed. The king bowed before Daniel and witnessed that God is the God of gods and the King of kings. (Dan.2:46,47) But soon after this, the king forgot all of this and erected an image of himself with a gold-plated body. He ordered that all should bow down to it or they would be thrown into a fiery furnace. (Dan. 3:6) · Nebuchadnezzar’s heart was like thorny ground, for he had heard the interpretation of the dream by Daniel, glorified God, appointed Daniel above all the wise men of Babylon, and appointed his three friends over all the affairs of Babylon. Soon, however, the thorns choked the word.

Building a golden image

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.” (v.1)

All the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before the image then a herald cried aloud:

‘To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

Complaint against the three youths

The wicked people talked with the king, telling him that “There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; These men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.” (v.8-12)

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, ‘Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?’ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will worship the gold image which you have set up.” (v.13-18)

Throwing the three youths in the fiery furnace

Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Therefore, he spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. He commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

Deliverance of the three youths

The three youths started praising God and glorifying Him in the fiery furnace. King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished, and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” “Look!” He answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke saying, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here.” Then, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire, and the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; The hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed is the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word and yielded their bodies that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-

Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this." Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon." (v. 24-30)

Chapter 4

The Decree of Nebuchadnezzar or the Haughty Tree

This chapter is unique in the Holy Bible where Daniel, the prophet, presents a royal decree revealing to the pagan king a divine talk God had with him in a dream. God talked with him twice in dreams before (ch.2) where He showed him the haughtiness of Babylon and its fall, and during the fiery furnace (ch.3) where God revealed to him that He defies the oppression of His people. In this chapter, God talks with him in a second dream to put him down, and to break his haughtiness. The book of Job states, "For God may speak in one way or in another, yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night when deep sleep falls upon men while slumbering on their beds, He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction." (Job 33:14-16)

In this royal decree, the old king confesses his pride and is not ashamed to witness to God who broke his pride by chastising him until He lowered him to the level of animals. He admits that he was under God's chastisement, and though it may appear severe, that he deserved it. Everything that happened to him was a natural fruit of his evil life, for now he is reaping from what he had sown and drinking from the cup which he had filled with his own hands.

Chapter 5

The banquet of Belshazzar

Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand." (v.1)

Writing on the wall

In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lamp stand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." (v. 5)

The hand appeared to the king only and not to the other dignitaries; that is why he was confused and terrified. The dignitaries became terrified like him, without seeing anything.

The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, 'whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.' (7)

All the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king its interpretation. Then King was greatly troubled.

The queen reminded the king of Daniel, who was most probably retired. The king was preoccupied in his desires which made him ignore God's man or resist God Himself.

Daniel explained to the king that the fingers of the hand were sent from God. This is the inscription that was written: **Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin**. Mene means: God has numbered your kingdom and finished it; Tekel means: you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; Peres means: Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Then Belshazzar gave the command and clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom” (v. 23-29).

Belshazzar was killed shortly after and the kingdom was transferred from the hands of the Babylonians to the Persians, and thus we move from the golden head of the statue to the silver chest and the shoulders, as mentioned in the second chapter of the book.

Chapter 6

Daniel in the Lion’s Den

This chapter presents the story of throwing Daniel in the lion’s den and it corresponds with the story of casting the three youths in the fiery furnace. The two stories confirm God’s great power to deliver His believers in the time of their tribulation. While Daniel was very old in years, he was not old in his spirit. The long time of captivity neither changed his heart nor his faithfulness to God. In that respect he remained as a youth and grew in faith despite his being deprived from a spiritual atmosphere.

Darius, another king, honored and trusted Daniel. Daniel became the tool which God had used to release his people from captivity. However, the devil did not stay quiet, for the more God was glorified in Daniel the more the devil was stirred to destroy Daniel. The king promoted him to be the second man in the kingdom, nevertheless, the enemy prepared for him a den of hungry lions to get rid of him and devour him.

The governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge nor fault because he was a faithful steward.

St. Jerome said: “Blessed is the man, against whom the enemies cannot find any charges, except concerning the law of his God.”

“So these governors and satraps thronged before the king and said thus to him, “King Darius, live forever! All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter.”Therefore, King Darius signed the written decree.” (v. 6-9)

They plotted against Daniel and envied his greatness, his righteousness and his loyalty to the king.

Daniel’s Faith

“Now, when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home, and in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.” (v.10)

Daniel's worshipping God in his upper room represents the elevation of the soul to meet God above the earthly matters.

The enemies talked against him in hatred saying, "This Daniel..." but the king defended him. However, the enemies were wise in their plot, for the king had already signed a decree in which he could not go back.

Daniel's Tribulation and Deliverance

The king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God whom you serve continually will deliver you." (v. 16) The God of Daniel is the God of the impossible. When all human efforts are incapable of any doing, then God's power is revealed.

Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed." (v.17)

The king was depressed in his castle and could not sleep. The evil people were plotting against Daniel and were happy for their success of getting rid of Daniel.

Since the king who did not know God, fasted and could not sleep for someone whom he wanted to deliver, **how much more should we fast and pray asking God's mercy for our many sins!**

God saved Daniel, and the king decided to punish the evil people and their families who plotted against the righteous Daniel.

The declaration of Darius

Then King Darius wrote: 'To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: peace be multiplied to you. I made a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues.'

Part II

Visions and Prophecies Chapter 7 – 12

Chapter 7

Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's vision

Instead of Daniel's interpretation to the kings' dreams, Daniel was granted a vision interpreted by the angel himself. This vision does not need any historical interpretation because it was interpreted to Daniel.

In general, this vision carries the same meaning of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar mentioned in the second chapter, but with different meanings and some additions. He saw the transfer of the kingdom from the Assyrians to Babylon (612 B.C.), and from Babylon to Persia (year 530 B.C.), and from Persia to Alexander the Great (year 331 B.C.), and from Macedonia to the Roman Empire which started in the year 63 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar, who represented the natural man, saw the great kingdoms of the world represented in the statue of a great man. The statue was metal with a bronze head. However, Daniel, the spiritual man, saw it represented in four wild hungry beasts talking about the moral issues of the kingdoms of the world. What Nebuchadnezzar saw represented the human vision to the four kingdoms, for they concentrated on wealth, authority, greatness. However, what Daniel saw represented God's outlook to those kingdoms, where he sees them all as wild beasts who want to devour the previous ones. Nebuchadnezzar saw it from the political point of view, whereas Daniel saw it from the spiritual point of view, which is the victory of the kingdom of goodness and the destruction of evil. Nebuchadnezzar saw Christ as a small stone growing little by little, but Daniel saw him as the glorious son of man (v.13,14) who came to establish His spiritual kingdom in the lives of the people.

Nebuchadnezzar did not see the antichrist, but Daniel saw him as the evil king who will appear at the end of days.

The history of the vision

Daniel was granted this vision during the first year of the reign of King Belshazzar, the last of the Babylonian kings (year 556 - 539 B.C.). From the historical point of view, this chapter actually comes before chapters five and six.

The Great Sea

Daniel spoke saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea." (v.2)

Some Jews see that the dragon, symbol of Satan, lives in the sea (Is.27:1), and that the watchful church which works with the mighty hand of God, dries the sea and attacks the dragon.

The First Beast: Babylon

And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first one was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it." (v. 3,4)

In verse 17, the four beasts refer to four kings, whereas in verse 23, the four beasts refer to the four kingdoms. It is obvious that every kingdom was ruled by one king. Nebuchadnezzar represented the kingdom of Babylon, while Cyrus represented the kingdom of Persia, and Alexander the Great represented the Greek Kingdom (Macedonia), and the Roman kingdom was referred to by the beast in Revelation chapter 13.

The Babylonian kingdom was represented by a lion with eagle's wings, that is, he is distinguished by power and the speed of motion, for the Babylonian kingdom dominated the whole world in a very short period. In the book of Ezekiel, Babylon was referred to by a flying eagle, which quickly devours its prey.

Daniel saw that the wings of the Babylonian kingdom were cut off, becoming unable to fly. This symbolizes the decline of the Babylonian empire.

The second beast: Medes and Persia

The Third Beast: The Greek Empire

The Fourth Beast: The Roman Empire

The Small Horn

The small horn symbolizes the anti-Christ. This was mentioned in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. (Matt. 24, 2 Thess.2:2-8, Dan. 7) to emphasize that although the Word of God is surrounded by many tribulations, the end result is the victory of the divine plan for the kingdom of God. If Satan and all his powers attack the kingdom, still the saints will reign with God, not on earth but in heaven.

The Ancient of Times

“I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.” (v. 9,10)

In front of Him flows a river which quenches our thirst, not with water but with holy fire, thus changing our depths to a paradise carrying the fruits of the inflamed spirit. Even if the anti-Christ is scary and dreadful, the children of God, in whom the heavenly river flows, become so powerful before who the devil cannot stand!

One like the Son of Man

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days. Then to Him was given dominion and a glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.” (v. 13,14)

The interpretation of the vision

“Now, it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, ‘Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.’” (v. 15,16)

Daniel desired the interpretation of the vision in a clearer way. He saw one having the appearance of a man. Most probably this was the Word of God before the incarnation who had the authority to command Gabriel the arch angel to interpret the vision (16). When God, who knows the inner heart, sees the yearning of one toward the truth, He reveals it to him and asks His heavenly ministers to reveal to him some of the hidden mysteries.

“So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, ‘Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end. Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. And he said, ‘Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be.’” (v. 17-19)

This vision was for the time of the end (v.17), that is, it pertains to the future. He probably meant that it will be fulfilled during the days of Antiochus, especially before the second coming of Christ. He emphasized that the vision will be fulfilled only in due time.

The archangel woke him up from his deep sleep and told him that the small horn (symbolizing the anti-Christ) will be destroyed. It was said that Antiochus died and the worms ate his body. Likewise, the anti-christ and his kingdom will be destroyed.

“The ram which you saw, having the two horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia. The male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king.

The broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall rise out of that nation, but not with its power. In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressions have reached its fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. Through his cunning, he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand.” (v. 20-25)

Daniel prophesied that Antiochus will destroy many in their prosperity (v.25). This was fulfilled when he sent his commander with 22,000 men to Jerusalem, as if it was a mission of peace. The soldiers used to go in and out until the Jews were used to them. They treated the people very gently. On a Sabbath while the Jews were worshiping in the temple, a command was issued to slaughter them all. Thousands were killed on that day, thus he destroyed many in their prosperity.

Daniel also prophesied that he will rise against the Prince of princes and shall be broken without human hand (25).. This was fulfilled when Antiochus Apiphanus attacked God Himself, the King of kings. He remained like that for 6 years (2300 days). The Maccabites attacked him and through them, the temple was cleansed and victory was proclaimed. Under the leadership of the Maccabites, the statue of Jupiter Olimpias was removed from the temple. The anger of Antiochus was aroused and he decided to eradicate all the Jewish race, but he had severe pain in his bowels and instantly died. Hence, he died by the divine providence and without human hand.

The visions of the evenings and mornings which was told is true (v.26) means that the vision had two sides: one gloomy which refers to the great tribulation and the other joyful which refers to the triumph of God’s people.

Daniel could not bear the vision so he became sick, unable to leave his bed. He was scared about what will befall the church whether during the times of Antiochus or the times of the anti-christ.

Daniel could not comprehend all the mysteries of the vision and therefore, he was astonished by the vision.

Chapter 8

The Ram and the Goat

In the last year of the reign of Belshazzar, when the Babylonian kingdom was about to end, God showed him a new vision about the destruction of old kingdoms so he may not be astonished when

he sees the destruction of Babylon. Many thought that Belshazzar would mock Cyrus and Darius, but God revealed, more than once, to Daniel the destruction of Babylon and Persia. Daniel enjoyed seeing a new vision which confirmed what came in the first vision and which explained it in more detail by revealing the extremely evil role which Antiochus Epiphanes played in the Old Testament and the antichrist in the end of days.

The vision of the ram v. 3-4

“Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no beast could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great.” (v. 3,4)

Since Daniel felt that he was called to see divine visions, he lifted his eyes to see. The vision indicated the appearance of the kingdoms of the Persians and the Medes and the Greeks. In its essence, the vision touches the eternity of the believers and their enjoyment of what is above. In great accuracy, the kingdom of Persia was likened to a ram with two horns, one higher than the other, because Persia became better than Medes. The two horns here correspond to the two sides of the bear in the previous revelation where it was raised up on one side (7:5), and also corresponds to the shoulders of the great metal statue. The pushing of the ram symbolizes the fast victories of the Persians.

The vision of the goat v. 5-8

“And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power.” (5,6).

The ram appeared with power and authority, pushing every animal he meets. Then an enemy appeared, which was the goat with a notable horn between his eyes. The prophet saw him coming from the west, because Greece is located west of Persia. The goat was so swift that his legs did not touch the ground (5). He and his army were like a bird flying in the air, not like one coming on ground or in the navy. The kingdom of Persia was compared to the **ram** while the Greek Empire was compared to the **goat**; for the goat is swifter than the ram. The ram was conquered and his two horns were broken and he fell on the ground, and there was no power in the ram to withstand the goat. (v.7)

This was a true vision for it was fulfilled after 200 years. Here God revealed to his prophet the victory of Alexander the Great who dominated the whole East. He went through many battles especially against Persia which had dominated many countries and which was compared to the ram that pushed in all directions.

Chapter 9

Since Daniel had great love for his people, and even to all humanity, God granted him wisdom, understanding, and the gift of prophecy. He interpreted the dreams for the kings as well as the visions pertaining to the future of the whole world. Now in his old age, as he noticed that God had promised the return of God's people from captivity after seventy weeks, as was mentioned in the book of Jeremiah, he started asking God, with humility, to forgive his people.

God granted him to see the vision of the **seventy weeks**, where God revealed to him not only the return of the people to Jerusalem, but also the return of all the human race to the divine bosom, by determining the time for the divine incarnation and the offering the unique Sacrifice of Christ. This prophecy was to correct the Jewish misinterpretations, for the Jews thought that after the captivity, they would establish a Jewish nation. However, the Word Incarnate was coming to establish a kingdom by His own sacrifice to grant the believers inner glory and not a temporary kingdom.

The special decrees of the return to Jerusalem and the restoration of building the temple

Three decrees were issued for the return to Jerusalem and rebuilding of the temple:

First decree: issued by Cyrus on the year 538 B.C. or 537 B.C. after conquering Babylon

Second Decree: King Artaxerxes I (464 B.C. to 424 B.C.) issued that decree in the year 457 B.C. and Ezra the priest carried it (Ezra 8) after about 80 years after their first return. The decree allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:13) to organize the Law and to apply the Law of Moses (Ezra 7:7), and to arrange the financial matters pertaining to the temple.

Third Decree: Artaxerxes I issued the third decree in the twentieth year of his reign during the month of Nisan (March/ April 445 B.C.). Nehemiah the cupbearer of the king carried it .

Seeing the Glory of God

Chapters ten through twelve cover the last of Daniel's visions.

Chapter Ten: Introduction of the vision which describes the appearance of the angel or probably the Word of God Himself.

Chapter Eleven: The vision itself presents special prophecies regarding the relationship between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Selukians of Syria and ends by the death of Antiochus.

Chapter Twelve: The conclusion of the vision which talks about the great tribulation and the end of times.

Chapter 10

Daniel presents this chapter as an introduction to the following two chapters, where he shows the concern of the heavenly creatures for the human world. (1 Chron.1:7, 2:1; Zech.3:1; Rev.12:7). He also presents the conflict between the angels and the evil powers for the salvation of the human race or their destruction. As the angels do not cease to work for the sake of those who will inherit the salvation (Heb. 1:14), likewise the devils do not cease to attack the truth and to perish the souls.

In the previous chapter, he presented to us a special vision of the seventy weeks which determined the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus to liberate the believers, as well as directing our attention to His second coming. Now in this vision, Daniel is confirming the main events from the time of the return of Babylon until the coming of the Lord Jesus in a precise way and in details.

1. The date of the vision: v.1
2. His enjoyment with the vision: v.2-9
3. The angelic ministry: v.10-14
4. Divine Ministry v15

Chapter 11

The Last Vision of Persia, Greece and the end of times

This chapter contains amazing prophetic details about the events of the world for a period of three centuries, which corresponded exactly to the historical events. It corresponded exactly to the history of kings of Egypt and Syria for more than 350 years. Verses 5 through 31 presented us prophecies about the wars which erupted between the kings of the North (Syria) and the kings of the South (Egypt).

1. Prophecies about Persia: v. 1-2
2. Prophecies about Greece: v. 3-4
3. Prophecies about the conflict between Egypt and Syria: v. 5-35
4. The end of times, the anti -Christ: v. 36-45

Chapter 12

The Great Tribulation and the Resurrection

Daniel talked about the great tribulation or the abomination of desolation which was partially fulfilled on a local level during the time of Antiochus Epiphanus, and will be fulfilled in all the world during the days of the antichrist at the end of times. Many of the fathers, especially St. Jerome, see that the words here are very clear and that they refer to the antichrist at the end of times.

Chapter 12 has 3 points;

1. The great tribulation v. 1
2. The resurrection v. 2,3
3. Conclusion v. 4-13

From the Inspiration of Daniel (12)

Yes, May the Times End!

For our sake, You created time so we may glorify You. And for our sake, time will end so we may be glorified eternally with You. Yes, May the times end and may You come to us, our Beloved, or may Your Holy Spirit carry us to You. We want to meet You very quickly! May You open the eyes of our hearts so we may see You coming to our inner depths, and may we see ourselves crossing to You to enjoy Your presence!

Ref. Study of the book of Daniel by Father Tadros Malaty