
A

COMMENTARY

ON THE

BIBLE.

THE

FIRST BOOK OF THE KINGS,

COMMONLY CALLED

THE THIRD BOOK OF THE KINGS.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

WE cannot with greater certainty than mere opinion, determine to whose instrumentality we are indebted for this and the following book of the Kings. It hath been generally supposed that some of the Scribes in the respective ages of the Church, compiled those histories. But there is no certainty on the point. But though we are left to mere conjecture concerning the writer, there can be none concerning the authenticity, or divine authority, of those sacred Books of God. For beside the historical part, many sweet passages are here and there treasured in them, which stamp their truth, and display the seal of the Spirit upon them.

This book of the Kings, and the second also, which is but a continuation of the same, contain the history of the Jewish Church and nation from the end of David's reign to the destruction of Solomon's temple, comprizing a period of somewhat more than four hundred and thirty years, beginning at about 1016 years before the coming of Christ, and ending with the commencement of the Babylonish captivity. Solomon's reign comprized a period of about forty years. After the division of the kingdom in the succeeding reign of Rehoboam, the kingdom of Israel, which forms one branch, was continued under the successive government of nineteen kings; and the kingdom of Judah, the other branch, under the government of the same number of kings. But what becomes more immediately interesting in the annals of those different monarchs,

is the marked attention which is all along paid by the sacred historian, in the preservation of the genealogy of Christ. The prophets Elijah and Elisha, in their respective ministry, form a very interesting part in both these books of the kings.

I only beg the Reader here, in the opening of this book of the Kings, to be continually on the look out for what the Holy Ghost is teaching the church in it concerning Jesus, and his gospel. The more hidden and obscure these precious subjects are, the more earnestly should our diligence be called forth in the investigation. It will be an ample reward to labour, if, through divine teaching, we are enabled to discover what the church in those distant periods, was taught concerning the person and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. Depend upon it, Reader, in no age of the church hath the Lord left himself without witness, that the Scriptures testify of him. Vouchsafe, blessed Spirit, in this thy gracious office-work of glorifying Jesus, to take of the things which are here of Jesus, and shew both to Writer and Reader. The blessing we implore from thee, O Lord, on the present occasion, is, that a *spirit of wisdom and revelation may be given us in the knowledge of him*; that our souls, by faith, may have a clear apprehension of *the things which are freely given to us of God*.

CHAP. I.

CONTENTS.

David, in his old age, unable to keep warmth, hath an handmaid provided to cherish him. Adonijah, his son, taking advantage of David's imbecility, usurpeth the kingdom. Solomon, by David's direction, is anointed king. Adonijah fleeth for refuge to the altar. These are the principal things contained in this Chapter.

NOW king David was old *and* stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat.

How humiliating to our nature are the infirmities of our old age; not because they are our nature, but because they are the fruits of sin. Disease, and languor of every kind, are the consequences of the fall. Hence the prophet describing the recovery of our nature by redemption, represents it under the similitude of a favoured climate, where the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity. Isaiah xxxiii. 24. David's age was not so very great. It was indeed the age of man; for I conjecture that he was now about 70. But Reader! David had been much worn. Troubles from others, and passions in himself; these wear fast the constitution.

2 Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let

her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat.

3 So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king.

4 And the damsel *was* very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not.

While the pious Reader feels suitable indignation at the corrupt counsel of the servants of David, let him bless God that he is living under a more gracious dispensation. Though from what is said in the last of those verses, we have authority to conclude that nothing criminal passed between them, yet David had smarted so exceedingly in the former periods of his life, for the indulgence of his lustful passions, one could have wished that he had spurned such advisers from his presence. Reader! see what a degraded state man is reduced to from the fall. Wherein, on this pursuit of carnal desires, doth he differ from the brute that perisheth. Psalm xlix. 20. Who can read the account of the prostitution of this young woman, and call to mind how very often similar events have taken place in all ages, in gratifying the detestable lust of the great, at the expence of the innocence of the poor, but must feel indignant at it. Oh! precious Jesus, how sweet is it in the recollection of the horrid pollutions of our nature, to behold thee who art holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Heb. vii. 26.

5 ¶ Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

6 And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also *was a very goodly man*: and *his mother* bare him after Absalom.

New afflictions arise to David. But Reader! observe how the divine sentence is fulfilled in them; *Evil shall arise against thee out of thine own house*. The afflictions of David, from the commission of his sin with Bath-sheba, always carried with them this mark. See 2 Sam. xii. 10, 11. It is somewhat very singular that David should call a son of his by such a name as Adonijah, which is a compound of two sacred names of Jehovah, *Adonai*, Lord, and *Jah*, which is the incommunicable name, implying the divine essence of God. We find indeed, in the Old Testament scriptures, the saints of God giving names to their children of somewhat significant, to denote their views of divine grace and favour. It is very profitable and becoming to call our children by such names as every time we look upon them may refresh the memory

with the recollection of God's mercies. Hannah's Samuel, and Leah's Judah; furnished out continued occasions of this sort. See 1 Sam. i. 20. Gen. xxix. 35. But there seems somewhat unbecoming in taking the divine names for our children. The messengers and servants of the Lord are perhaps exceptions to this; for we find *Elijah* distinguished by a name similar to Adonijah. *Elijah*, or as it is in the original, *Eli-jahu*; being a compound word also, and signifying "My God, Jehovah, is he;" which may be considered as if it expressed the authority of his commission; My God Jehovah is he that hath sent me. With respect to Adonijah, most undeserving was he of such a distinction; and justly proved himself a second Absalom, whose brother he was, both in nature and in folly.

7 And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped *him*.

8 But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which *belonged* to David, were not with Adonijah.

In this conspiracy he made a party, as bad men will, for the most part, find bad men to countenance them.

9 And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, which *is* by Enrogel, and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants:

10 But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not.

It should seem that like Absalom his brother, he begun his iniquities with sacrifice. It is sad when men's ambitious views stimulate them to evil. But it is awful indeed when such men begin their evil designs with professions of religion, as if they wished you to believe the Lord gave countenance to them. See 2 Sam. xv. 7, &c. The evil conduct of Adonijah in this usurpation was the more pointed, because the succession of the kingdom had been already fixed by God himself on Solomon, as Adonijah could not but know. The Reader will discover this also if he compares 2 Sam. vii. 12, 13, with 1 Chron. xxii. 6--11. But Reader! after having paid all due respect to the historical part of this subject, turn your thoughts to an infinitely more interesting part in the spiritual; and behold in Adonijah's attempt to subvert the kingdom, the representation of those who will not have the Lord Jesus Christ to reign over them. Here an ample subject opens to our meditation, which the Reader will do well to enlarge upon and improve.

11 Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not

heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our Lord knoweth *it* not?

12 Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon.

13 Go and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign?

14 Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I also will come in after thee, and confirm thy words.

We find upon most of the remarkable events in David's life, that the Lord his God raised up for him suitable instruments. Nathan is here evidently such in the hand of God, to accomplish the purposes of God's will, but after reading this passage as an history, we should look at it in an higher and more important point of view. Solomon, as we shall soon discover when we come to remark the circumstances of his life, was in many instances a lively type of Jesus. As such, we may consider Nathan the prophet in this place as representing faithful ministers of Christ. It is their office to forward and promote among men the Redeemer's kingdom. And what he saith to Bath-sheba concerning Solomon's being king, may with infinitely greater propriety be said concerning the Lord Jesus being king. Didst not thou say, O Lord, that Jesus should be king in Zion, and reign and rule over his people and in them, by his grace? Why then is it, that the Adonijah's of my poor corrupt nature, and the powers of darkness so often rise up in rebellion?

15 And Bath-sheba went in unto the king into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite ministered unto the king.

16 And Bath-sheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king. And the king said, What wouldest thou?

17 And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the LORD thy God unto thine handmaid, *saying*, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne.

18 And now, behold, Adonijah reigneth; and now, my lord the king thou knowest *it* not:

19 And he hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called.

20 And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel *are* upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.

21 Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders.

It should seem that David must have assured Bath-sheba by oath concerning Solomon's succession; though it is not noticed when. But what is most particularly to be remarked in this address of Bath-sheba is, that she declares the eyes of all Israel are upon David, that he should name his successor; no doubt, because what David should deliver on this subject would be considered as coming from God; David himself being anointed of God. See 2 Sam. xxiii. 1—3. It is sweet when the people of God wait for the revelation of the mind of God. It hath been a maxim of the church in all ages, that the law of God should be sought for from the Lord's messengers. What an awful consideration to make men faithful! Malachi ii. 7.

22 And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in.

23 And they told the king, saying, Behold, Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground.

24 And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne?

25 For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and, behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah.

26 But me, *even* me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called.

27 Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not shewed *it* unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. It is delightful when the servants of Jesus are found to correspond in promoting Jesus's glory, and advancing his kingdom among men. A thing which the Lord would certainly bless, if all were to preach, not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.

28 Then king David answered and said, Call me Bath-sheba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king.

29 And the king sware, and said, *As* the LORD liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress,

30 Even as I sware unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day.

31 Then Bath-sheba bowed with *her* face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

The most interesting part of those verses is that which represents David as eyeing the Lord's hand in all his deliverances. We have a similar example in the patriarch Jacob, when dying. The God, said he, which fed me all my life long unto this day; the angel which redeemed my soul from evil. What angel did he mean but the angel of the covenant, even Jesus? Gen xlviii. 16.

32 ¶ And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king.

33 The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon:

34 And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon.

35 Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.

Beside the historical relation of this event, the principal beauty of the passage is to look through it to the spiritual reference it hath to the throne of Jesus. Who, indeed, can read David's appointment of Solomon to the throne of Israel, without calling to recollection how God, even the Father, hath set his king upon his holy hill of Zion? Sweetly did the angel, in his salutation to Mary, make this one principal feature of Jesus; "He shall be great (said he) and shall be called, The son of the highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke i. 32.

36 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen: the LORD God of my lord the king say so *too*.

37 As the LORD hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David.

38 So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon.

39 And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon.

40 And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them.

The anointing of Solomon is no more typical of Jesus, as the Christ of God, than the anointing of David, or any other of the kings or priests of Israel. But it doth not seem to become a question, but that all the

anointings in the church, from the first to the last, were wholly with an eye to Christ. The only difference between them and him being only in the quantity. They all had the anointing of the oil of gladness, as it is called. But Jesus had the Spirit poured out upon him without measure. See Psalm xlv. 7. John iii. 34. I do not, for my part, hesitate to believe, but that as the Son of God, as Mediator, is uniformly held forth in the old church as the Messiah, that is the anointed, which was to come; all the anointings and services with the holy oil, pointed expressly to him, and to him only. Sweet thought to the believer! Hence the church speaking of Jesus, saith, *Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth.* Song i. 3.

41 And Adonijah and all the guests that *were* with him heard *it* as they had made an end of eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, Wherefore *is this* noise of the city being in an uproar?

Reader! do observe the very different state of Adonijah and his party from that of Solomon and his followers. There was no anointing, no divine call, no proper authority, to make Adonijah king. Instead of looking to heaven for a blessing, they were serving their lusts and pleasures. And of such Paul speaks; *whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly; whose glory is in their shame.* And will not, nay, doth not, sudden death and sudden destruction overtake all the workers of iniquity in like manner. Philip. iii. 19.

42 And while he yet spake, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came: and Adonijah said unto him, Come in; for thou *art* a valiant man, and bringest good tidings.

Good tidings indeed, to poor sinners, even rebellious sinners, that Jesus reigneth. Oh! that the proclamation would cause every poor sinner to cast down the weapons of sin out of his hands, and bend the knee to Jesus. Reader! depend upon it, the knee that will not bow in love and duty, shall break in terror and dismay! Isaiah xlv. 23.

43 And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king.

44 And the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule:

45 And Zadok the priest and Nathan the pro-

phet have anointed him king in Gihon: and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. *This is the noise that ye have heard.*

46 And also Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom.

47 And moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, saying, God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne. And the king bowed himself upon the bed.

48 And also thus said the king, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, which hath given *one* to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing *it*.

49 And all the guests that *were* with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way.

If the relation of this event of Solomon's accession to the throne became so alarming to Adonijah and his guests; think, Reader, what terror will appall the souls of sinners at the last day, when Jesus whom they have despised, shall burst forth in the clouds to judgment, and the whole world be summoned by the archangel's trump to stand before his awful throne! The Holy Ghost hath recorded somewhat of those alarms among the guilty, who despised Jesus in this life, but who will then call to the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and to hide them from his presence. Rev. vi. 15—17.

50 ¶ And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.

God's altar was considered, in the wilderness state of the church, the refuge for sinners. No doubt, with an eye to Jesus, who in the gospel church is our altar himself. The *presumptuous* man-slayer, was, however, to find no shelter there. See Exod. xxi. 13, 14.

51 And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me to day that he will not slay his servant with the sword.

52 And Solomon said, If he will shew himself

a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die.

53 So king Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and bowed himself to king Solomon: and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house.

Solomon begins his administration in mercy. Go to thine house, said he to Adonijah. But our Jesus's whole administration is mercy. I have said, mercy shall be set up for ever. *Go and sin no more*, is the language of Jesus to the poor, self condemned adulteress. John viii. 11.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! do not overlook, in the melancholy view which is given us in this chapter of poor David's cold and perishing body, what dying worms the greatest of men are; and how sure and certain it is, that death passeth upon all men, because all have sinned! Precious Jesus! what a relief is it to the souls of thy people, that amidst all the dying circumstances of themselves and the world around, thou livest for ever. Oh! the unknown, inexpressible glory, contained in these words, *Jesus Christ; the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*. And, *because I live ye shall live also*.

How sweet is it to behold dying saints, like David, anxious to provide gracious successors. Particularly dying ministers and servants of our Jesus. Of all the thoughts which lie near the heart of a faithful pastor in Jesus, this must be one of the most anxious, Whom will my God appoint over this household? Whom will the Lord send to go in and out before his people! David's anxiety for thrusting out Adonijah, and establishing Solomon in the kingdom, could not be half so interesting as to a dying, faithful minister, is the concern that the Lord would cast out all the Adonijah's who serve not him, but their own bellies, and send the people pastors after his own heart, which should feed his people in understanding and knowledge. But Reader! amidst the anxious concern of faithful stewards in the household of Jesus, let us comfort ourselves with this pleasing assurance, Jesus hath still the keys, and is still in the midst of the throne to govern. As the church of Jesus, let all his people hope and trust in him. When David dies Solomon shall reign. If he puts out one light he can easily cause another to shine. He hath the stars in his right hand.

But Reader! let us not close the chapter before that we have taken another view of the coronation of Solomon. Surely, as we behold our eyes may well be directed to the contemplation of a more glorious person: for *a greater than Solomon is here*. Yes, dearest Jesus! if Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, anointed Solomon king; and if the shouts of the multitude, on this occasion, were so great that the very earth rent with the noise; surely heaven and all its powers must take a part in that unequalled joy, when every poor sinner, such as I

am, is by thy almighty grace enabled to crown thee Lord of all. Thou hast on thy head many crowns. The crown of the Godhead, being one with the Father. The crown of thy God-man, thy mediatorial glory. The crown of redemption which thou hast won, and now wearest. The crown of victory over sin, death, hell, and the grave. And yet, oh! thou dearest Jesus, is not the crown which the sinner puts upon thy sacred head, when thou hast not only wrought out salvation *for* him by conquering all his foes; but wrought out salvation *in* him by conquering his own wayward will, which opposed thy government over him; is not this crown precious in thy sight! Oh! Lord Jesus, be thou my sovereign God and king! Gladly do I bow the knee before thee; gladly doth my heart, my soul, and all within me confess, that *Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

CHAP. II.

CONTENTS.

David's whole history we are brought to the conclusion of in this chapter. Here is his farewell charge to Solomon, and his death. Solomon's succession is soon followed with the deaths of Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei.

NOW the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying,

There is somewhat very affecting in the dying moments of all men; but particularly so when eminent servants of the Lord come to die. We feel highly interested to know what they say, what were their views, and what their feelings, as they went down into the Jordan of death. The Holy Ghost hath been pleased to gratify the church on this point in numberless instances; and, in a part of scripture where many of the Old Testament saints are brought together into one point of view, we are told in general terms, that they all died as they had lived, believing: *These all died in faith.* See Heb. xi.

2 I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man;

3 And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:

4 That the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there

shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.

The opening of this charge to Solomon is just as might be expected from the man after God's own heart. What could he say; what ought he to have uttered, but such a charge concerning his regard to the faithful God as he here delivered to his son, as his successor in the kingdom? The Holy Ghost, in the parallel passage of David's dying scene, which he hath been pleased to have recorded in the first book of the Chronicles, gives a much more particular account of his last words, both to Solomon, and to the princes, and the captains of his court, than is here mentioned. And as there are several leading circumstances in that account which David, as a dying prophet, delivered in reference to the gospel church, I could wish that the Reader would consult that scripture while he has read this. See 1 Chron. xxviii. 1—10.

5 Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, *and* what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that *was* about his loins, and in his shoes that *were* on his feet.

6 Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.

7 But shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother.

8 And, behold, *thou hast* with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword.

9 Now therefore hold him not guiltless; for thou *art* a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.

It should seem, from the particular charges David gave to Solomon concerning those men, Joab and Shimei, that his conscience told him he

had not done justice in suffering a murderer like Joab to go unpunished. And with respect to Shimei, the grievous curse perhaps of which he complains was of a spiritual nature, levelled against the covenant. I am, I confess, inclined to think so; as being in David's view what belonged not to him to pardon. If Shimei's conduct came at all under this description, it came not within the power of David to pardon. See Deut. xiii. 12-17.

10 ¶ So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

Here we come at last to David's death and burial. Alas! what is the sum total of every man's history in the world, but that he was born, and lived, and died, and was buried? But, Reader, let you and I solemnly remember that, as it is appointed unto men once to die, so after death there is a judgment. Ah! here is the thing which makes both life and death important. *Where* we die, or *when* we die, is not so interesting; but it is of eternal consequence *how* we die. Blessed (said the voice of heaven) blessed are the dead that die *in* the Lord. Heb. ix. 27. Rev. xiv. 13.

11 And the days that David reigned over Israel *were* forty years: seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem.

If the Reader be curious to calculate, he will find that David's reign was six months more than forty years. But the Holy Ghost, in causing this memorial of David's reign to be marked down, was pleased to have it conveyed to the church in even numbers. And I am the more glad of it, because it acts as an authority and precedent for me, in my Commentary, in which I have purposely chosen to set down, upon different occasions, the periods of time in the same round numbers.

12 ¶ Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly.

From hence we may properly date the commencement of Solomon's reign. And let the Reader observe what is said, that it was established greatly. Reader! how precious is it when our Jeditiah, our Solomon, hath his kingdom established greatly in our hearts!

13 ¶ And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably.

14 He said moreover, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And she said, Say on.

15 And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and *that* all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is

turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the LORD.

16 And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on.

17 And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king, (for he will not say thee nay,) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife.

18 And Bath-sheba said, Well; I will speak for thee unto the king.

19 Bath-sheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand.

20 Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; *I pray thee*, say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother; for I will not say thee nay.

21 And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife.

22 And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; for he *is* mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah.

23 Then king Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life.

24 Now therefore, *as* the LORD liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day.

25 And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him that he died.

Unless we take into our account certain circumstances which very probably operated on the mind of Adonijah, as well as the probability that this Shunammite had been really married to David, by which the intention of Adonijah was incestuous, the great displeasure of Solomon cannot be well explained. Solomon was appointed by the Lord to the kingdom, as the successor of his father, and therefore we find that during the rebellion of Adonijah he appeared as one not anxious for the event. But now he is king, and his throne fully established, wherefore doth he take alarm at Adonijah's request? But it will throw a light upon the subject if we suppose, as hath been conjectured by some, that the Shunammite was betrothed to David, though, from his age and imbecility, it is said he knew her not. Yet the proposed alliance with his son Adonijah, if granted, would have led to incest. But, beside this, the object put on another appearance, as it respected the kingdom. When Absalom usurped the crown, it was the advice of Ahithophel that he should go in unto his father's concubines, by way of intimating publicly that he and his father were in hatred. See 2 Sam. xvi. 20, 21. Hence this attempt of Adonijah to do the same respecting Abishag, Solomon considered as implying the same. And as Solomon was so eminent for wisdom, he discovered this design, and crushed it in the bud. But, Reader, let you and I gather improvement from it, and consider how much it behoves us to bring every enemy, both secret and open, under the feet of Jesus.

26 And unto Abiathar the priest said the king, Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine own fields; for thou *art* worthy of death; but I will not at this time put thee to death; because thou barest the ark of the LORD God before David my father, and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted.

27 So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

I do not presume to say as much, but yet I think it is likely, that Abiathar was at the bottom of Adonijah's proposal concerning Abishag; for Solomon, in his answer to his mother Bath-sheba, seems to hint at it in the 22d verse. But the degradation of Abiathar from the priest's office became a confirmation of what God had threatened concerning the house of Eli. Abiathar was the last high priest of that family; which, though predicted fourscore years before, was not confirmed until now. However slow, yet God's judgments are sure. The apostle makes a striking observation upon it, 2 Pet. iii. 8—10. How gracious Solomon appears in his dismissal of Abiathar. He reminds him of his attachment to his father, and therefore deals gently by him. Think, Reader, in what a multitude of instances the Lord Jesus deals thus with sinners, and how gracious he is in the midst of judgment.

28 ¶ Then tidings came to Joab: for Joab had

turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom. And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.

29 And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD; and, behold, *he is* by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, fall upon him.

30 And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay; but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me.

31 And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father.

32 And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing *thereof*, *to wit*, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah.

33 Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever; but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the LORD.

34 So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.

The death of Joab is not for his joining in Adonijah's rebellion, but it is for the murders he had committed. And Solomon evidently, in this instance, meant to take away the blood of iniquity from the kingdom. It was in conformity to the divine law; and Solomon is not the law-maker, but the law-fulfiller. See Gen. ix. 5, 6. Oh! how sweet is it to the relief of every poor, distressed, burthened conscience, that Jesus hath both fulfilled the law, and paid the penalty to the law, by the sacrifice of himself.

35 And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host: and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar.

It is delightful to see a throne surrounded with upright servants. It is yet, if possible, more delightful to see the church of Jesus filled with faithful ministers.

36 ¶ And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither.

37 For it shall be, *that* on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head.

38 And Shimei said unto the king, The saying is good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days.

By this process a foundation was laid for securing Shimei's fidelity, or opening the door for his punishment. And it should seem that those articles of agreement were entered into before the Lord, and sanctioned with his authority. I know not whether the Reader enters with me in his feelings, into a similar view of Kidron. But since Jesus passed this brook in the night of his agony in the garden, preparatory to his death, the very mention of the place raises many interesting images to the mind. To trace thy footsteps, dearest Jesus, though, like Shimei, it brought on death, oh! for faith to think nothing of the sacrifice!

39 And it came to pass at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away unto Achish the son of Maachah king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, Behold, thy servants be in Gath.

40 And Shimei arose, and saddled his ass, and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants: and Shimei went, and brought his servants from Gath.

41 And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and was come again.

42 And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the Lord, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, on the day thou goest out, and

walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die? and thou saidest unto me, The word *that* I have heard *is* good.

43 Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the LORD, and the commandment that I have charged thee with?

44 The king said moreover to Shimei, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head;

45 And king Solomon *shall be* blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever.

46 So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

The event was just as might be expected. Sinners lay the foundation of their own ruin; and even, as the Psalmist saith, are entrapped in the works of their own hands. And verily do I believe, in the end of the day, every despiser of Jesus and his blessed gospel, will be condemned out of their own mouth, when it will be proved that salvation hath been brought home to their very doors, and proclaimed in their streets, and they have rejected the counsel of God against their own souls. Well might the apostle exclaim, *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* Heb. ii. 3.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! after gathering all the instructions from this chapter which the Holy Ghost graciously intended from it, for the comfort and edification of his church and people, let us direct our views to the contemplation of David; and, having here seen his end in his death and burial, first consider the character of this man as he is in himself; and, secondly, in the light in which he eminently stands in the church, a type and figure of the ever blessed Jesus.

When we consider David in his original obscurity of situation, as the son of Jesse! When we behold him brought forth and placed in a state so high and exalted! When we view him in all his private life, and public usefulness! When we see him in his most exalted seasons of piety! and when we behold him no less in his falling into sin—What a wonderful character, taken together, doth he appear! The most extraordinary perhaps that ever the Lord brought forward from among the sons of Adam. No doubt, eminently intended to be held forth as a monument

in the church; that his most astonishing heights of devotion might comfort, encourage, and animate the people of God. And no less that the sad falling into sin, from which almighty grace recovered him, might encourage poor penitent transgressors to hope in his mercy, in and through Jesus.

But, when we have duly pondered over the character of David, as he was in himself, I would beg the Reader to look at him yet more leisurely and attentively, as he stands in the church, a type and figure of our ever-adored Redeemer. Here he comes forward in a more eminent manner, and challenges our more serious consideration.

Chosen of God from among the sheepecotes, and from the lowest obscurity, how doth he prefigure Him who was taken from among the humblest of men, and set up in the councils of peace from everlasting, And if David was the man after God's own heart, who can overlook in him the type of Jesus, Jehovah's elect, in whom his soul delighteth; the man whose name is the Branch, and concerning whom a voice from heaven proclaimed him God's well-beloved Son, in whom his soul was well pleased? Did David fight the battles of the Lord; did he conquer Goliath, and the armies of the uncircumcised Philistines? and did not Jesus obtain the victory over all the enemies of our salvation? Was David anointed king over God's people contrary to the wishes of Saul, and all the expectation of Israel? and was not Jesus crowned king in Zion in direct defiance of Herod, and all the expectation of the people of the Jews, who declared that they would not have this man to reign over them? Did David make his way to the throne through a series of persecution, affliction, and distress? and who can forget the sorrows, persecutions, and oppositions, dearest Jesus, by which thou didst purchase the crown of redemption, before it was put upon thy sacred head? Was David surrounded with his worthies, the captains, and elders of Israel; and what a noble army of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, followed the Lord Jesus? Was David the sweet psalmist of Israel, and did he compose songs for the sanctuary? And what songs of salvation hath our Jesus taught his people, both in the temple service below, and in the realms of bliss above, when the redeemed of the Lord shall come to Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever! Hail! blessed Jesus! thou hast the key of David; thou art both the root and the offspring of David! David's son after the flesh, and David's Lord and God in the divinity of thy nature. Truly, Lord, many kings have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Oh! may the history of all thy servants lead my soul to thee. They shall lay on thee all the glory of thy Father's house; and on thee would I lay all the glory of my salvation!

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

This chapter opens with the relation of some of the first events which took place in the beginning of Solomon's reign. His marriage with Pharaoh's daughter. God's appearance to him in a dream. His choice. And the chapter concludes with an account of his sound judgment, in deciding a matter of controversy between two harlots.

AND Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.

This marriage with a stranger to the house of Israel, appears to have been a very strange event: and yet we do not find it reprobated. Some have thought that before the marriage took place, she was proselyted to the true religion. Be this as it may, from the wonderful book which he wrote upon this occasion, (as is said) the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's, we cannot but hope that the hand of the Lord was in it. And it is remarkable, and well worthy the Reader's attention, that the strange gods, which it is said in the after period of his life his idolatrous wives and concubines led him to, are not said to have come from Egypt. See chap. xi. 1—5. And it is yet worthy of further remark by the Reader, that the prophet Isaiah speaketh of Egypt as the third with Israel, and the Lord of hosts shall bless them together, saying, *Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of mine hands, and Israel mine inheritance.* See Isaiah xix. 24, 25. But may we not go yet one step further on this subject, and observe, that as Solomon was an eminent type of Jesus, may not this marriage with Pharaoh's daughter be considered as a figure of Christ's union with the Gentile church?

2 Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the LORD, until those days.

This sacrificing on high places is uniformly spoken of in the Old Testament scripture as improper, and contrary to the divine appointment. Deut. xii. 2—6.

3 And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.

This is a beautiful, but short account of Solomon. *He loved the Lord.* A volume could not say more. Reader! do not forget that the love of any man towards the Lord is an evidence of the Lord's love to him; for the apostle saith, *we love God because he first loved us.* And as the Lord sent by Nathan on the birth of Solomon, and called his name *Jedediah*, which signifies *beloved of the Lord*; this therefore is abundantly plain. 2 Sam. xii. 25.

4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there: for that *was* the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

The Reader will do well to compare the pallel history of Solomon, as we have it related in the opening of the second book of the Chronicles.

There we learn that this high place at Gibeon was the proper consecrated place of worship, the tabernacle of the congregation being there. So that this high place differed most essentially from the general acceptance of what is called high places in the Old Testament. See 2 Chron. i. 3.

5 ¶ In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

The Old Testament scriptures hold forth to us many examples of this kind, of the Lord's appearing to his servants in dreams and visions of the night. But, Reader, do you suppose that the chosen people of the Lord were more favoured on this account than they are now? Since the Son of God came down and tabernacled among us, was it to make our privileges less? If so, might we not say, "Lord! thou appearedst to Solomon and others in days of old, and didst bid them ask of thee blessings. Bring us back to these darker dispensations again!"—Reader, what say you to this? Could you use such language? And yet doth not, in fact, every one in reality say this, and even worse, who doth not by faith keep up a constant communion, through Jesus, with our covenant God in him, with full assurance, according to Jesus's own promise, that whatsoever we ask the Father in his name, he will give it. John xvi. 23. Did we but believe, heartily and cordially believe, the record that God hath given of his dear Son, we should as heartily and cordially believe also, that all that Jesus hath promised is yea and amen in him. So far, therefore, is it from our privileges being lessened since redemption-work was finished by Jesus, that they are increased beyond all conception of increase. And, instead of the Lord now appearing to his people in visions and dreams of the night, he manifests himself to them by faith in the clearest tokens of noonday. *If a man love me, (saith Jesus) he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.* And so of the Spirit of truth, the promise is the same, though *the world cannot receive him, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* Oh! precious, precious consideration, in proof of the indwelling residence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the hearts of the Lord's people! See John xiv. 23 and 17.

6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day.

7 And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and *I am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in.

8 And thy servant *is* in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

How delightful a petition this was of Solomon's! how different from men of the world! and how evident that his mind was under divine teaching. Reader! do not forget that we cannot pray as we ought, as the apostle saith, unless the Spirit teach us; whatever we say in prayer to our God in Jesus, God, by his blessed Spirit, must first say to us, Rom. viii. 26. Under this heavenly teacher, what an high mercy it is, in the silence of the night, or amidst the tumults of the day, to have our souls going forth in prayer or praise to the Lord! David hath a beautiful thought on the subject when he saith, *I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.* Psm. xvi. 7. Behold, Reader, the modesty, the humbleness, and teachable mind of Solomon. He calls himself a little child; one that knoweth not how to go out or come in, in the midst of such an enlightened nation as Israel. How sweet is it to behold ministers, both in church and state, thus diffident, and seeking grace from the Lord!

10 And the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing.

11 And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

12 Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

13 And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

Do observe, Reader, how the Lord expresseth his approbation of what

is in fact at the same time the precious workings of his own grace in their hearts. We have another beautiful example of the same kind in the gospel, where our Lord Jesus is said to have marvelled at the faith of the centurion, meaning, that he called upon those around to take notice of it; when it was Jesus himself, as the author and finisher of faith, literally and truly wrought it in the poor man's heart. Matt. viii. 10. Do observe further, the bounty of our God in his gifts to Solomon. The Lord not only gave him wisdom and understanding, and all other blessings suited to his need for his exalted station; but, because he had passed by what men of the world would most covet, the Lord superadded all those unasked. But when you and I, Reader, have paid all due respect to the subject, as it concerned Solomon king of Israel, let us look at the subject a little more closely, and see whether a greater than Solomon is not typified here. Do I not see in what is said Jesus, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Solomon, as his type, had wisdom beyond all the kings of the earth. But that, spiritually considered, Jesus was implied in the whole, is evident from what the Lord promised by vision, when David, speaking by the Spirit of prophecy, declared in another scripture, *Thou spakest in vision to the Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people. His seed will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.* Compare this with Psalm lxxxix. 19—37, and Psalm lxxii. throughout.

15 And Solomon awoke; and, behold, *it was a dream.* And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

Reader! it is impossible to enter into the full apprehension of what the feelings of Solomon were, unless, like him, our own souls have known somewhat of the refreshments of grace. But oh! the mind of man is certainly furnished by its great Author, when in a state of regeneration, for such manifestations of divine love. The patriarch Jacob's history affordeth a most delightful instance of the kind. Gen. xxviii. 11—18.

16 ¶ Then came there two women, *that were harlots,* unto the king, and stood before him.

17 And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house.

18 And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we *were* together; *there was* no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house.

19 And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it.

20 And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom.

21 And when I arose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear.

22 And the other woman said, Nay; but the living *is* my son, and the dead *is* thy son. And this said, No; but the dead *is* thy son, and the living *is* my son. Thus they spake before the king.

23 Then said the king, The one saith, This *is* my son that liveth, and thy son *is* the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son *is* the dead, and my son *is* the living.

24 And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king.

25 And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other.

26 Then spake the woman whose the living child *was* unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, *but* divide *it*.

27 Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she *is* the mother thereof.

Here was an opportunity very speedily afforded, after the Lord's pouring out an understanding heart upon Solomon, for the exercise of it. No doubt, it became a very nice point, as there were no eye witnesses to determine whose representation was true. Solomon shewed his penetration by the proposed division of the living child. Not that the king would really have put it to the experiment; but it was to decide by calling forth the tender feeling of the real mother. The pretended mother, in a moment, plainly proved that she could never be the mother of a child, to consent to the slaughter of it for division. I would only

desire the Reader to remark, the melancholy circumstance which those wretched women called harlots have, in a multitude of instances, shewn by the wilful murder of their base children. In order to hide their disgrace from men, they bid defiance to God: and in what nature shudders at, the murdering of their own poor, unconscious babes, have sought relief from their shame of uncleanness. Alas! what a state our nature is sunk to! There is another instruction we ought to gather from this view of the subject, namely, that while we behold this harlot with bowels yearning over her child for the salvation of the body; how ought it to teach every true parent to feel for the salvation of the soul? Oh! how lost to all bowels of compassion must those wretched parents be, who can look on and see the sword of God's offended justice uplifted, and ready to fall on their children, by reason of sin; and yet send forth no cry, offer up no prayer; nay, remain themselves and their children unconscious also, that without an interest in Jesus, who, like another Solomon, may stop the sword from its office, they must perish for ever! Oh! precious Jesus! how is it possible for me to read this instance of the sword ready to devour, and not call to mind how the Lord Jehovah commanded the sword to awake and smite thee, who art fellow to the Lord of Hosts, that the Lord might lay his hand upon the little ones? Surely when thou wast smitten we escaped, and by thy stripes we were healed. Zech. xiii. 7. Isaiah liii.

28 And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God *was* in him, to do judgment.

Well might all Israel admire Solomon's wisdom on this occasion. And well may you and I, Reader, admire and adore Jesus, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is indeed both the wisdom of God and the power of his salvation, to every poor sinner that believeth; and the grand object and design of redemption is, to display the grace and goodness of Jehovah in this stupendous work, *to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.* So that every heart interested in this great salvation may well exclaim, *Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* Ephes. iii. 10. Rom. xi. 33.

REFLECTIONS.

Oh! how precious the testimony the Holy Ghost hath given in this chapter to Solomon, that he loved the Lord! wilt thou, merciful God, shed forth a portion, and let it be as large a portion as my soul can find capaciousness to admit, of the same heavenly principle in my poor heart also. Oh! dearest Jesus! give me grace to say, though, like Peter, a thousand actions seem to have denied it, *Lord, thou knowest all things! thou knowest that I love thee.*

And wilt thou, Holy Spirit, visit me in the visions of the night! shall mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I may be occupied in thy word! will the Father of mercies come! will the Lord Jesus come,

agreeably to that promise, and make his abode in my soul? Doth God indeed speak to me? Doth he graciously say, *Ask what I shall give thee?* Precious Jesus! give me thyself; for, having thee, I shall possess all things. Lord, it is not thy salvation only I desire; but thee. Not thy gifts only, but thyself also: not thy grace only, but thy person too: not that I may have life only, but that thou mayest be my life, and my portion for ever. Yes! dearest Jesus! my soul through thy blessed teaching me these sweet lessons, my soul cannot rest short of any thing but thyself. Since thou wert first pleased to look upon me, and speak to me, and shew me thyself, my heart is not my own; thou hast drawn it up to heaven; and now, Lord, keep it for ever, and give me thine. And since God my Father, and all his fulness is in thee; all joy in thee; all happiness in thee; I desire no happiness but thee. Witness for me, ye ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who are the heirs of salvation; Jesus is my all, and in all. *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart fail, but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!*

CHAP. IV.

CONTENTS.

This chapter relates to us Solomon's splendour and greatness. An account of his princes; his twelve officers; the peace and extensiveness of his kingdom; and of his great wisdom.

SO king Solomon was king over all Israel.

This is spoken of in contradistinction to his father, who in the beginning of his reign had but part of Israel. And perhaps in contradistinction from all his successors, Solomon reigned over all Israel. And so doth Jesus over all his people, notwithstanding the malice of the enemy. All power is his in heaven and in earth. He is king of nations as well as king of saiahs.

2 And these *were* the princes which he had; Azariah the son of Zadok the priest,

3 Elihoreph and Ahiah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder.

4 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the host: and Zadok and Abiathar *were* the priests:

5 And Azariah the son of Nathan *was* over the officers: and Zabud the son of Nathan *was* principal officer, *and* the king's friend:

6 And Abishar *was* over the houshold: and Adoniram the son of Abda *was* over the tribute.

Honourable testimony is given to his princes. But what were Solomon's princes to the princes of Jesus? Reader! think what an unspeakable privilege that is, which maketh poor sinners kings and priests to God and the Father! Sweetly Hannah sung over this when she said, he raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory. 1 Sam. ii. 8. And yet, if possible, sweeter still the apostle sounds an higher note, when speaking to believers in Jesus he saith, But ye are a chosen generation; a royal priesthood; an holy nation; a peculiar people; that he should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light! 1 Pet. ii. 9.

7 ¶ And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, which provided victuals for the king and his household: each man his month in a year made provision.

8 And these *are* their names: The son of Hur, in mount Ephraim:

9 The son of Dekar, in Mekaz, and in Shaal-bim, and Beth-shemesh, and Elonbeth-hanan:

10 The son of Hesed, in Aruboth; to him *pertained* Sochoh, and all the land of Hepher:

11 The son of Abinadab, in all the region of Dor; which had Taphath the daughter of Solomon to wife:

12 Baana the son of Ahilud; to him *pertained* Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth-shean, which *is* by Zartanah beneath Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, *even unto the place that is beyond* Jokneam:

13 The son of Geber, in Ramoth-gilead; to him *pertained* the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, which *are* in Gilead; to him *also pertained* the region of Argob, which *is* in Bashan, three-score great cities with walls and brasen bars:

14 Abinadab the son of Iddo *had* Mahanaim:

15 Ahimaaz *was* in Naphtali; he also took Basmath the daughter of Solomon to wife:

16 Baanah the son of Hushai *was* in Asher and in Aloth:

17 Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar:

18 Shimei the son of Elah, in Benjamin.

19 Geber the son of Uri *was* in the country of Gilead, *in* the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan; and *he was* the only officer which *was* in the land.

Honourable account is also given of the purveyors of Solomon's household, whose office it was to provide sustenance for the king's table. Blessed Jesus! what an honour hast thou conferred on the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries, that they, as Scribes well instructed in thy kingdom, should bring out of thy treasury things new and old. Oh! grant them grace, dearest Lord, all whom thou hast called and appointed to the work, that they may be found as is required of stewards, faithful! 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

20 Judah and Israel *were* many, as the sand which *is* by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry.

21 And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life.

Perhaps the splendour and greatness of Solomon's person, court, and subjects, were never equalled by any prince. He not only governed his own people, but other nations were tributary to him. Now was fulfilled the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand of the sea for multitude. Gen. xxii. 17. But delightful as this relation is, as an history, the glory of it is nothing compared to the spiritual sense, considered with an eye to Jesus and his kingdom. If the Reader will read the 72d Psalm with this chapter, and mark the features of both in reference to the Lord Jesus, he will discover that though in that psalm many things said in it *may be* applied to Solomon; *many* more in it *cannot* be applicable at all to him; and *must be* applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. David's prayer for Solomon, as the title of that Psalm expresses it, was therefore prophetically delivered in reference to Jesus. Solomon's reign indeed was a peaceable reign, a wise administration, and he a blessing to his subjects. But of Solomon it never could be said that *he should redeem the souls of his people*; that *prayer should be made to him*; and that *his name should be continued as long as the sun*. Reader! behold, I beseech you, in this delightful account of Solomon's splendour, glory, government, and the happiness of his people, the typical representation of our Jesus; who is not only king of Zion, but the desire of all nations; unto whom, either in love or fear, every knee shall sooner or later bow,

and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The mirth of Judah and Israel may serve to teach us also what joy and gladness of heart constitutes the Redeemer's kingdom: his consisteth not indeed in meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Rom. xiv. 17.

22 And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal.

23 Ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts, and roebucks, and fallow-deer, and fatted fowl.

24 ¶ For he had dominion over all *the region* on this side the river, from Tiphseh even to Az-zah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him.

The provision for Solomon means for his court and servants. But what an astonishing allowance, and this not for an occasional feast, but for every day's table. One of the old writers hath computed that the bread and flesh here set down would afford ample food, even as a feast, for nearly fifty thousand men. But Reader! after having our astonishment carried to the utmost stretch, in considering such a daily supply for such a multitude; how infinitely short doth this fall of the daily supply of our Jesus's table. He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living, both in providence and grace, with plenteousness! What a thought! David, after enumerating the several works of inanimate creation, speaks in one of his psalms of the animated part, and breaks out into those devout expressions; *these wait all upon thee that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.* Psm. civ. 27. Reader! let us cherish this thought, for it is a very sweet and refreshing one. Jesus feeds his people. Jesus keeps a daily, nay an hourly court: a constant table. He still receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. He will not remit the bounties of his house, neither will he send the poor and the hungry empty away. If, dearest Lord! in the days of thy flesh thou didst supply the wants of thousands in the wilderness, by multiplying a few loaves and fishes into ample food for all; surely thou wilt not relax in thy mercy now, when all power is thine in heaven and in earth! Thou wilt feed thine hidden ones with the bread that is handed in secret, and give them to eat of that bread which perisheth not in the using, but endureth unto everlasting life. *Lord!* (I would say for myself and for all thy people), *evermore give us this bread*, which is thyself. John vi. 33—35.

25 And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon.

It is charming to see the safety and security of Solomon's subjects.

But what is this compared to the everlasting safety and security of Jesus's servants! how beautifully the prophet sings of this, looking into gospel days, and in reference to our Jesus. See Hosea xiv. 7.

26 And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

27 And those officers provided victual for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing.

28 Barley also and straw for the horses and dromedaries brought they unto the place where *the officers* were, every man according to his charge.

We may (still carrying on the idea of Solomon's splendour) have a conception of the greatness of his equipage by the number of his horses. But how much more interesting is the view of Jesus' glory, of whom the sacred writer tells us, *the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, and the Lord is among them as in the holy place of Sinai.* Psalm lxxviii. 18. If it were not for swelling this commentary to too great a bulk, I should beg the Reader to indulge me with the throwing in a few thoughts on what Jesus saith to his church, in that sweet song Solomon wrote under inspiration, in allusion to this very subject of the horses of those days. *I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.* Song i. 9. Believers, in the eye of Jesus, are chosen, select, beautifully singled out as a chosen generation and a royal priesthood, by redeeming grace, as the choicest horses are marked for the royal chariots. Moreover, they are purchased at an high price; for believers are bought with no less a price than the blood of Christ. Horses also are costly. We read of a single one of Solomon's valued at 150 shekels of silver: See chap. x. 29. But how precious in the sight of God are the souls of his people! and as the horses of Pharaoh's chariots we may well suppose were properly fed, trained, and not used in ordinary service; so the people of God are fed with the bread of life, trained by divine grace, and employed only in the ways and commandments of the Lord, whose service is perfect freedom. But I must not enlarge on those points.

29 ¶ And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.

30 And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

31 For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan

the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about,

Here we arrive at the pinnacle of Solomon's glory; the wisdom and largeness of heart which the Lord gave him, not simply in human sciences, though here we find he surpassed the most eminent for learning among the Egyptians and Chaldeans; but Solomon excelled in that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation. And Reader! do observe the expression; it is said that God gave it to him. Yes! it is not to be acquired. It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. Zech. iv. 6. But Reader! when you have paid all due respect to what is here said concerning Solomon's wisdom; think only what a shadow the whole of it formed of that, of which the substance is in the person of Jesus, who is emphatically called, by way of summing up his character, Wisdom itself; and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Prov. viii. throughout. Coloss. ii. 3. Oh! thou who art the wisdom of God and the power of God for salvation to thy people! how fully doth all wisdom centre in thy person, and manifest itself in all the saving offices, relations, and characters, by which thou art made known to thy people! and Reader! while you and I are looking up to our only wise God and Saviour, as the apostle Jude his servant justly calls him, let us ask for a portion of that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation, and that our souls may know the precious assurance, and rejoice in it, that he is made of God to us both wisdom and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; that all our glorying may be in the Lord. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

Whether the book of Proverbs which bears his name, or any part of it, is in the number of those 3000; or whether the song of songs, which also he wrote, is among the 1005 of his songs; is not easy to say. It should seem that, as we have reason to hope all Solomon's writings were to the divine glory, the sacred historian had these in view which are divinely inspired. And especially, as Solomon is said to have been wiser than *Ethan* and *Heman*, some of whose writings also were inspired, and are handed down to us in the collection of the book of psalms, as *maschil* or matter of instruction. See Psalms lxxxviii. and lxxxix. whose names in the title those psalms bear. But certainly both in human and divine learning, the general tendency of this account is to point out Solomon's pre-eminency.

34 And there came of all people to hear the

wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

What honour the Lord put upon Solomon! but what glory hath the Father given to our Solomon, his dear and ever blessed Son! in whom it hath pleased him that all fulness should dwell, and to whom all the kings of the earth, and all nations, must come to receive out of his fulness, and grace for grace. Oh! may my soul come and turn aside from all created wisdom, all the powers of human knowledge and learning, to behold in thee, thou blessed Jesus, that wisdom which eclipses all earthly science, and puts out, by thy meridian brightness, the glow-worm shining of nature's glory. Let me behold thy rays, let me be brought under thy wings, thou Sun of Righteousness, for in thy light shall I see light! Psalm xxxvi. 9.

REFLECTIONS.

IN beholding the greatness and majesty of Solomon, as this chapter represents him; his riches, his courts, his retinue, his servants, and more especially his great wisdom; I desire to ascribe all due praise and glory to the Lord God of Solomon, in distinguishing his chosen with such marks of his love and favour; and to bless so bountiful a God in having given such power unto men. But from the court of Solomon, and all his grandeur, my soul desires rapidly to take wing, and flee by faith to the court of heaven, and behold Jesus in the midst of the throne, as possessing all power in heaven and in earth. What was Solomon in all his glory compared to him who maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind? Nay, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed in point of beauty like even the lillies of the field. But thy throne, blessed Jesus, as one with the Father, in the nature of the Godhead, was and is thine, from everlasting, and so must be to all eternity. And as the mediator, thou art in full right of the throne for ever and ever. Methinks the thought of Solomon's court, prompts my soul to contemplate with the eye of faith the unfading splendours of thine. Yes! heavenly King! my soul beholds thee as king over all; God blessed for ever. I see thy princes like Solomon's. I view thine officers whom thou hast appointed over thine household, to give thy people meat in due season. I behold thee encircled with all the innumerable host of angels; the spirits of just men made perfect; the noble army of martyrs; the glorious company of apostles; the venerable host of patriarchs; the sacred band of prophets; the multitude which no man can number, who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; the church above triumphant; the church below still militant; all Judah and Israel, and the nations that are saved by thy blood: all! all! are of thy court, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it. To thee then, King of kings, and Lord of lords, do I come to hear thy wisdom, to see thy glory, to adore thy name, and to bow my knee before thee, as my Saviour, my king, and my God.

Oh! then blessed Jesus, do thou maintain thy kingdom in my heart. There reign, there rule, there govern; there give out of thy fulness and

of thy wisdom. And while the services of every creature, the praises of every angel, and the love and affection of every redeemed soul, become thy just revenue; oh! Lord God, let the poor worm that is now looking up to thee partake of thy bounty, and be enabled to give to thee of thy praise; till from living under the grace of thy courts here upon earth, thou shalt call me home to live eternally under the more immediate view of thy glory, and the everlasting enjoyment of thy presence in thy courts above; where the city hath neither the need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of the Father doth lighten it, and thou dearest Lamb of God, art the light thereof. Amen! Amen!

CHAP. V.

CONTENTS.

We have in this chapter the congratulations of Hiram, king of Tyre, which he sent to Solomon on his accession to the throne, Solomon's answer. Hiram furnisheth timber at Solomon's request to build the temple. An account of Solomon's workmen and labourers for the service.

AND Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father: for Hiram was ever a lover of David.

It should seem from what is here said, that Hiram, king of Tyre, was always a lover of David, and that this must have been on account of his religion; or if not on this account, it was the Lord which inclined this man's heart to a regard for David, and so it was David's religion which gave rise to it. *When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.* Prov. xvi. 7.

2 And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying,

3 Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God, for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet.

4 But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent.

5 And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name.

6 Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that *there is* not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians.

Solomon's embassy to Hiram being on so important a subject as the building of the temple, every part of it becomes interesting for the pious Reader to regard. Herein Solomon was eminently a type of Jesus, of whom the prophet predicted that *he should build the temple of the Lord, and he should bear the glory.* Zech. vi. 13. It is worthy of remark that Lebanon was in Solomon's territories, but Hiram's servants were more expert in hewing timber than the Israelites. Now the prophet Isaiah explains this in reference to gospel times. The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls; and their kings shall minister unto thee; that is, unto Jesus. See Isaiah lx. 10. And Solomon, as a type of Christ, had the ministry of those servants of Hiram, the men of Tyre and Sidon; and Hiram himself is brought in upon this occasion to minister as an instrument in the Lord's hand to the service of Solomon, in building his temple. But Reader! there is still a greater beauty in the subject considered as typical of the gospel church of Jesus. Oh! Reader! think what sons of strangers in our Gentile church the ministers of Christ are, whom the Lord hath employed to build the walls of his Zion! may not every one of this description exclaim, *My birth and my nativity is of the land of Canaan; my father was an Amonite, and my mother an Hittite.* See Ezek. xvi. 3. Oh! how marvellous and distinguishing is the grace of God! if the Reader be desirous to see more of the beautiful figures made use of concerning Lebanon, &c. I refer him to Isaiah lx. throughout.

7 ¶ And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people.

8 And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir.

9 My servants shall bring *them* down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged

there, and thou shalt receive *them*: and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household.

The Lord disposed the heart, no doubt, of this prince to put an helping hand to so good a work. And as the workman is worthy of his hire, he bargains with Solomon for the food of his household. Jesus our Solomon keeps a good house; and they that wait at the altar are made partakers with the altar. 1 Cor. ix. 13. The place of delivery which Hiram agreed to deposit the timber at, the mouth of Tyre, was the very spot which in after ages became so memorable by our Lord's personal visit, and the exercise of his ministry there. See Matt. xv. 21, &c.

10 So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees *according to* all his desire.

11 And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat *for* food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year.

12 And the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him: and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together.

13 ¶ And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men.

14 And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, *and* two months at home: and Adoniram *was* over the levy.

15 And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains;

16 Beside the chief of Solomon's officers which *were* over the work, three thousand and three hundred which ruled over the people that wrought in the work.

There is somewhat so truly amiable in the character of Hiram, and particularly as his zeal in this service seems to have been with an eye to the temple, that one cannot help expressing an hope that the league between him and Solomon was founded in Jesus.

17 And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, *and* hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.

18 And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew *them*, and the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.

It is impossible to behold Solomon laying the foundation stone for the temple without carrying our thoughts to the contemplation of that foundation stone which God hath laid in Zion: a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation. Oh! precious Jesus! thou art indeed a foundation stone, for other foundation can no man lay. Thou art most firm, most durable, most strong, and lasting, even eternal. And as thou art so precious in God my Father's view; so, dearest Lord, be thou everlastingly in mine. On thee hath Jehovah built his church. On thee do I, through his blessed Spirit, build my whole salvation. And as Solomon's builders, and Hiram's builders, did hew and square the stones for the temple, so, blessed Jesus, thou almighty master-builder, (for thou hath chosen and hewn me out of the quarry of nature), do thou polish my soul by regeneration, and rear up a structure of grace in my heart, that I may be an holy temple to the Lord. Ephes. ii. 21.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us pause over what we have read in this chapter, and in the view here afforded us of such workmen as Hiram's servants, behold how striking a representation it bears to numbers in the present day, to whom abilities of nature and of art are given, but to whom perhaps is given no grace! how many possess the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, who know nothing of his gracious work upon the heart! how many minister in holy things, who are yet no partakers in the spirit of holy things! of all the awful scriptures to this amount we meet with in the word of God; none can exceed in terror that declaration of Jesus: Many will say unto me in that day, Lord! Lord! have we not prophesied (that is preached) in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils; (that is perhaps have been made instrumental to others in the delivery of the word of salvation, by which the strong man armed is cast out of the soul) and in thy name done many wonderful works. And what can be more wonderful than to behold sinners awakened and converted through the instrumentality of a preached gospel? And then, saith Jesus, will I profess unto them, "I never knew you:" that is, perhaps never knew them in a way of vital union, their own souls never having been savingly brought into fellowship and communion with the Lord Jesus. Oh! Reader, what an awful consideration, to have been made helpful to the salvation of others, while uninterested for our own, To be daily ministering in the temple without a real connection with the Lord of the temple!

Let us turn our thoughts from the contemplation of a state so dread-

fully alarming, to the consideration of the reverse side of the subject, and in the happy, the inexpressibly happy state of the souls built upon the same foundation as the apostles and prophets are, which is the Lord Jesus Christ, the chief corner-stone; look up to our God and Father in Christ Jesus, with an humble hope that he is our portion. Yes! dearest Jesus! I would say for myself, and all thy people, thou art the foundation of all my hopes, all my desires, all my wishes, and all my joys. God, my Father, of his infinite love laid this foundation. On thy glorious person, as the God-man, the whole structure rests; thy blood and righteousness is the grand cement which unites and keeps it eternally together; and in thee the whole building, thy church, which is thy body, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. Come, then, blessed Jesus! carry on, complete, adorn and finish, the work in my soul; let thy mercy be built up for ever, and let the top stone of the spiritual building be brought forth with shoutings of grace, grace unto it.

CHAP. VI.

CONTENTS.

This chapter furnisheth a number of interesting particulars concerning the building of Solomon's temple. The time it took in building until it was finished. In the earlier part of this service the words of the Lord came unto Solomon with promises concerning it.

AND it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.

The Holy Ghost hath been pleased to have it recorded as to the exact time when this wonderful work of Solomon's temple was begun; even 480 years after the children of Israel came out of Egypt. And Solomon's reign was suffered to run on to the fourth year before he found time to set about it. Reader! it is really astonishing how rapid the wheels of time, and with them the wheels of human life, run on. How sweetly doth Jesus enforce the necessity of diligence in our spiritual concerns. *I must work (saith Jesus) the works of him that sent me while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.* John ix. 4.

2 And the house which king Solomon built for the LORD, the length thereof *was* threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits.

It appears that the pattern was given to David before his death, how this temple should be built. See 1 Chron xxviii. 11, 12, 19.

3 And the porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits *was* the length thereof, according to the breadth of the house; *and* ten cubits *was* the breadth thereof before the house.

4 And for the house he made windows of narrow lights.

5 And against the wall of the house he built chambers round about, *against* the walls of the house round about, *both* of the temple and of the oracle: and he made chambers round about:

6 The nethermost chamber *was* five cubits broad, and the middle *was* six cubits broad, and the third *was* seven cubits broad: for without *in the wall* of the house he made narrowed rests round about, that *the beams* should not be fastened in the walls of the house.

7 And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.

8 The door for the middle chamber *was* in the right side of the house; and they went up with winding stairs into the middle *chamber*, and out of the middle into the third.

9 So he built the house, and finished it; and covered the house with beams and boards of cedar.

10 And *then* he built chambers against all the house, five cubits high: and they rested on the house with timber of cedar.

The particularity of description given, no doubt in allusion to the gospel church, hath much spiritual significance. And many learned and pious men have conceived much of divine things are intended by it. We cannot err indeed in our *general* idea concerning Solomon's temple. That it was a type of Christ who is the true temple, and in whom dwelt all the fulness of the God-head bodily; this is most certain. But whether the several departments in this temple; the porch before it, the narrowness of the lights to the windows, the chambers round about,

the different proportions of those chambers, the winding stairs, and the several compartments of middle, lower, and upper rooms, had peculiar references expressive of a spiritual meaning; I rather conceive this is difficult to say. Taken altogether, in one point of view, as typical of Jesus, no doubt can possibly remain. And this is enough to call up our attention to the contemplation of it.

11 ¶ And the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying,

12 *Concerning* this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father:

13 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.

This message from the Lord forms a most interesting parenthesis in the midst of the work. The Lord was pleased to let Solomon know that his eye was upon him in what he was engaged; and his arm should support and direct him through it. Busy as the king was from day to day, and in the Lord's work; still he must find time to attend to the Lord himself. Personal communion with Jesus must never be lessened or interrupted by the most busy life. In ministers especially, the more the public duties of the sanctuary call them forth, the more need have they to be frequent in private waiting upon Jesus. That man can have but little real regard, whatever outward zeal he may seem to shew, for the souls of others, who hath no sense of the worth of his own. Jesus took from the silence of the night to make up the want of leisure in the day. Dear Lord! how precious is thy example. Matt. xiv. 23.

14 So Solomon built the house, and finished it.

Reader! it is a sweet thought this verse suggests, how happy as well as wise the soul who not only begins in Jesus, but ends in Jesus. Who makes him the Omega, as well as the Alpha, of his salvation. This is a wise master builder. Some shift the foundation of their faith, and as Paul says, begin in the spirit, but seek to be made perfect in the flesh. They begin, as it were, upon a free grace bottom, but soon stop short, and turn in to their own works. Reader! I would charge it upon you, and upon my own heart also; let Christ be all and in all; both the author and the finisher of faith. It is a precious thing to hold on and hold out to the end, and make Jesus what the Father hath made him, the whole of the covenant. Gal. iii. 1—3.

15 And he built the walls of the house within with boards of cedar, both the floor of the house, and the walls of the ceiling; *and* he covered *them*

on the inside with wood, and covered the floor of the house with planks of fir.

16 And he built twenty cubits on the sides of the house, both the floor and the walls with boards of cedar: he even built *them* for it within, *even* for the oracle, *even* for the most holy *place*.

17 And the house, that *is*, the temple before it, was forty cubits *long*.

18 And the cedar of the house within *was* carved with knops and open flowers: all *was* cedar; there was no stone seen.

19 And the oracle he prepared in the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

20 And the oracle in the forepart *was* twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof: and he overlaid it with pure gold; and *so* covered the altar *which was of* cedar.

21 So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold: and he made a partition by the chains of gold before the oracle; and he overlaid it with gold.

22 And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the house: also the whole altar that *was* by the oracle he overlaid with gold.

23 And within the oracle he made two cherubims of olive tree, *each* ten cubits high.

24 And five cubits *was* the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing unto the uttermost part of the other *were* ten cubits.

25 And the other cherub *was* ten cubits: both the cherubims *were* of one measure and one size.

26 The height of the one cherub *was* ten cubits, and *so was it* of the other cherub.

27 And he set the cherubims within the inner house: and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubims, so that the wing of the one touched the *one* wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house.

28 And he overlaid the cherubims with gold.

29 And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, within and without.

30 And the floor of the house he overlaid with gold, within and without.

31 And for the entering of the oracle he made doors *of* olive tree: the lintel *and* side posts *were* a fifth part *of the wall*.

32 The two doors also *were of* olive tree; and he carved upon them carvings of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid *them* with gold, and spread gold upon the cherubims, and upon the palm trees.

33 So also made he for the door of the temple posts *of* olive tree, a fourth part *of the wall*.

34 And the two doors *were of* fir tree: the two leaves of the one door *were* folding, and the two leaves of the other door *were* folding.

35 And he carved *thereon* cherubims and palm trees and open flowers: and covered *them* with gold fitted upon the carved work.

36 And he built the inner court with three rows of hewed stone, and a row of cedar beams.

I include all these verses in one and the same point of view, for shortness sake. No doubt, many things here mentioned are highly significant of gospel mercies. As Solomon is elsewhere said to have built himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon; the pillars whereof were silver, the bottom thereof gold, the covering of it purple, and the midst thereof paved with love; (See Song iii. 9, 10.) so here we find in the temple the walls of the house were of the cedar of Lebanon, the floor and chains pure gold, and the oracle overlaid with gold. Perhaps these things were intended as the similitude of the glorious things concerning

Jesus. His human nature is the true temple, which the Lord hath pitched, and not man; for the body was prepared him. And nothing could be more expressive of the incorruptible nature of the body of the Lord Jesus than the wood of the mountain of Lebanon, which was always understood as possessing a soundness not liable to rot. The gold on the floor and the house, and all the parts of it, as strikingly referred to the God-head of Christ. And this was the bottom of all, and gives efficacy and validity to all. For the grand object of the Redeemer's mission, his blood, his sacrifice, and the merits of his righteousness, would never have been sufficient to have satisfied divine justice, and expiated the sins of our nature, had not the God-head of Jesus conferred an infinite value upon the whole, in being the blood, sacrifice, and righteousness of God. Hence Paul, in giving charge to the ministers of the church of Ephesus, dwells upon this feature as the distinguishing one to induce the utmost earnestness in their labours. Take heed (says he) unto yourselves, and to all the flock, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. Acts xx. 28.

37 ¶ In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the LORD laid, in the month Zif:

38 And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which is the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it.

It is astonishing to conceive that so great a work could have been accomplished in so short a time. We find that Solomon was employed thirteen years in building his own house, but the house of God only seven. Not that his own bore any kind of proportion, in point of magnificence, I apprehend, but that Solomon was less eager, less earnest, for its accomplishment. Reader! it is a blessed sign of grace when divine things occupy our thoughts, and call up our affections more than human. It is a blessed precept of Jesus, and connected with a blessed promise in the performance, which I venture to believe hath never failed in a single instance in the experience of the faithful; *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things* (lesser things which are needful) *shall be added unto you.* Matt. vi. 33.

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, Reader, over this chapter, and while beholding the vast design of Solomon's temple and the greatness of the work in the accomplishment of the building, behold that a greater than Solomon is here. Was it not, dearest Jesus, upon the foundation of infinite love that thou with the everlasting Father and the Holy Ghost, didst lay the foundation of the temple, which is thy body, and reared and completed the whole work of our redemption? Not indeed in temples made with hands; not in the limitation of time in seven years, or seventy times seven; but from everlasting. Yes! Lamb of God, who wast inten-

tionally slain from before the foundation of the world: thou hast built the temple of the Lord, and thou hast borne, and must for ever bear, all the glory. Everlasting praises to thy dear name for the unspeakable mercy.

While I behold the temple of Solomon, and figure to my view the piles of cedar and the wedges of pure gold! oh! lead my soul beyond these outward adornings, and these outward things, to the contemplation of all that inward glory which thou hast, by thy one glorious undertaking in redemption, wrought out and accomplished for all thy people. Thy person, thine offices, thy righteousness, thy gifts, thy graces; all precious Jesus which are thine, and of thee, and in thee; these are the true temple both of Jew and Gentile, both of bond and free; both of the church militant and the church triumphant. Here in thee may my soul find a temple eternally to dwell in, and do thou, dearest Jesus, from an union with thee by thy Spirit, make me a living temple in which Jesus may everlastingly dwell, until the building of this house shall be taken down, and my soul shall be called to *the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. And oh! thou blessed, holy, gracious Jesus, when thou shalt have brought me home with all the church to fill thy courts above, and to surround thy throne, there shall I behold the streets of the city of the new Jerusalem of pure gold, infinitely surpassing all the splendour of the golden floor in Solomon's temple. There the cherubims will not be of ornament, but of reality. And there the workmen will for ever have ceased from their labours, and have entered into their rest, as our God hath done from his. But chiefly, and above all, Jesus himself will be there with God our Father, and the Holy Ghost; and no temple will be needed there; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. In the glorious expectation of this great day of God, do thou, blessed Jesus, give me daily to be beholding my sure foundation in thee, and my soul's compleat resting upon thee, that as a lively stone in the spiritual building of thy church and people, *I may be growing up unto an holy temple in the Lord, for an habitation of God through the Spirit*.

CHAP. VII.

CONTENTS.

To the building of the temple, succeeds in history, the building of Solomon's house, which this chapter records: likewise, the house of Lebanon, and of the house of Pharaoh's daughter. Here is the relation also of the works of Hiram, and of the vessels Solomon made for the house of the Lord.

BUT Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house.

I conceive that this length of time mentioned, which Solomon took to build his own house, more than the Lord's house, is not spoken of by way of reproof, but rather commendation. The King's business requires dispatch. The work of God of the day, must be done in the day. The night cometh when no man can work. Reader! how stands

God's work with you? I mean your finished work in Jesus! Perhaps you have built your own house. But is the Lord's temple finished? Know you not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

2 ¶ He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon; the length thereof *was* an hundred cubits, and the breadth thereof fifty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits, upon four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams upon the pillars.

3 And *it was* covered with cedar above upon the beams, that *lay* on forty-five pillars, fifteen in a row.

4 And *there were* windows in three rows, and light *was* against light in three ranks.

5 And all the doors and posts *were* square with the windows: and light *was* against light in three ranks.

Whether this house of the forest of Lebanon, be what Jesus commends in the church's beauty, of the Tower of Lebanon, which looked towards Damascus, I do not determine. See Song vii. 4. But certainly it is a sweet idea which it furnisheth concerning the ministry of God's servants. Looking towards Damascus, may very fairly, and without violence to the sacred text, be supposed to imply the vigilance of ministers, always on the look out, as watchmen upon the walls of Zion, upon the ways and roads by which the enemies of our God and his Christ, come with their attacks from Damascus. In this sense, the church herself is said to be terrible, *as an army with banners*. Song vi. 4.

6 And he made a porch of pillars; the length thereof *was* fifty cubits; and the breadth thereof thirty cubits: and the porch *was* before them; and the *other* pillars and the thick beam *were* before them.

7 Then he made a porch for the throne where he might judge, *even* the porch of judgment: and *it was* covered with cedar from one side of the floor to the other.

8 ¶ And his house where he dwelt *had* another court within the porch, *which* was of the like work. Solomon made also an house for Pha-

raoh's daughter, whom he had taken *to wife*, like unto this porch.

9 All these *were of* costly stones, according to the measures of hewed stones, sawed with saws, within and without, even from the foundation unto the coping, and *so* on the outside toward the great court.

10 And the foundation *was of* costly stones, even great stones, stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits.

11 And above *were* costly stones, after the measures of hewed stones, and cedars.

12 And the great court round about *was* with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams, both for the inner court of the house of the LORD, and for the porch of the house.

I do not hesitate to say, that notwithstanding the particularity with which these things are marked, I cannot more than in generals, discover their resemblance to divine things. The porch of Solomon's temple was certainly held in high esteem, for in the second temple, built after the return of the church from Babylon, the fathers thought proper to preserve the same name, and this was rendered remarkable by the healing of the cripple. See Acts iii. 2, 11. And here it was we find the apostles particularly assembled. Acts v. 12, 13. The apostle Paul, after describing some interesting things concerning the shadowy ordinances of the law, when speaking of the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat, adds a similar thought, and saith, *of which we cannot now speak particularly*. See Heb. ix. 5.

13 ¶ And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre.

14 He *was* a widow's son of the tribe of Naphthali, and his father *was* a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work.

This Hiram, we must remember, though called here by the same name, is not Hiram the king of Tyre, but an artist. In the Chronicles he is called Hiram. See 2 Chron. iv. 11. It appears that he was by the mother's side an Israelite, though his father a man of Tyre. How this mingling of the holy seed came to pass, is not noticed. High honour is conferred on him, in being employed in the service of building the temple.

15 For he cast two pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece: and a line of twelve cubits did compass either of them about.

16 And he made two chapiters of molten brass, to set upon the tops of the pillars: the height of the one chapter *was* five cubits, and the height of the other chapter *was* five cubits:

17 And nets of checker work, and wreaths of chain work, for the chapiters which *were* upon the top of the pillars; seven for the one chapter, and seven for the other chapter.

18 And he made the pillars, and two rows round about upon the one network, to cover the chapiters that *were* upon the top, with pomegranates: and so did he for the other chapter.

19 And the chapiters that *were* upon the top of the pillars *were* of lily work in the porch, four cubits.

20 And the chapiters upon the two pillars *had* pomegranates also above, over against the belly which *was* by the network: and the pomegranates *were* two hundred in rows round about upon the other chapter.

21 And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz.

22 And upon the top of the pillars *was* lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished.

We may readily conceive, from the names of *Jachin* and *Boaz*, given to those pillars, that their being set up, had a spiritual object in view. They were placed at the entrance of the temple, near the door. And as the name of *Jachin* signifies a *thing fixed*; and *Boaz* implies *strength*; do not both serve to convey this idea, that when believers in Jesus approach the door of the temple, their souls should be fixed on Him they come to meet and worship, and offer all their poor services in his strength. And there is this more in the view; it is the Lord which will fix and strengthen his people, like *Jachin* and *Boaz*, not to be moved.

23 And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from

the one brim to the other: *it was* round all about, and his height *was* five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about.

24 And under the brim of it round about *there were* knops compassing it, ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about: the knops *were* cast in two rows, when it was cast.

25 It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea *was set* above upon them, and all their hinder parts *were* inward.

26 And it *was* an hand breadth thick, and the brim thereof was wrought like the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; it contained two thousand baths.

There can be no question, but that this brazen sea was figurative of the gospel fountain for sin and for uncleanness. But oh! how vastly short and inferior was all this, even in similitude, and indeed all the shadowy ordinances of the law, to our substance in the gospel. *These things stood only* (as Paul speaks) *in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.* Heb. ix. 10. Oh! holy Saviour! how doth the riches of thy grace, and the efficacy of thy blood appear, when compared to these shadows! Sweetly hast thou said, and sweetly hast thou proved it, *that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance.* Prov. viii. 21.

27 And he made ten bases of brass; four cubits *was* the length of one base, and four cubits the breadth thereof, and three cubits the height of it.

28 And the work of the bases *was* on this manner: they had borders, and the borders *were* between the ledges:

29 And on the borders that *were* between the ledges *were* lions, oxen, and cherubims: and upon the ledges *there was* a base above: and beneath the lions and oxen *were* certain additions made of thin work.

30 And every base had four brassen wheels, and plates of brass: and the four corners thereof had undersetters: under the laver *were* undersetters molten, at the side of every addition.

31 And the mouth of it within the chapter and above *was* a cubit: but the mouth thereof *was* round *after* the work of the base, a cubit and an half: and also upon the mouth of it *were* gravings with their borders, foursquare, not round.

32 And under the borders *were* four wheels; and the axletrees of the wheels *were joined* to the base: and the height of a wheel *was* a cubit and half a cubit.

33 And the work of the wheels *was* like the work of a chariot wheel: their axletrees, and their naves, and their felloes, and their spokes, *were* all molten.

34 And *there were* four undersetters to the four corners of one base: *and* the undersetters *were* of the very base itself.

35 And in the top of the base *was there* a round compass of half a cubit high: and on the top of the base the ledges thereof and the borders thereof *were* of the same.

36 For on the plates of the ledges thereof, and on the borders thereof, he graved cherubims, lions, and palm trees, according to the proportion of every one, and additions round about.

37 After this *manner* he made the ten bases: all of them had one casting, one measure, *and* one size.

38 Then made he ten lavers of brass: one laver contained forty baths: *and* every laver was four cubits: *and* upon every one of the ten bases one laver.

39 And he put five bases on the right side of the house, and five on the left side of the house:

and he set the sea on the right side of the house eastward over against the south.

40 And Hiram made the lavers, and the shovels, and the basons. So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made king Solomon for the house of the LORD.

41 The two pillars, and the *two* bowls of the chapters that *were* on the top of the two pillars; and the two networks, to cover the two bowls of the chapters which *were* upon the top of the pillars;

42 And four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, *even* two rows of pomegranates for one network, to cover the two bowls of the chapters that *were* upon the pillars;

43 And the ten bases, and ten lavers on the bases;

44 And one sea, and twelve oxen under the sea;

45 And the pots, and the shovels, and the basons: and all these vessels, which Hiram made to king Solomon for the house of the LORD, *were of* bright brass.

46 In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan.

47 And Solomon left all the vessels *unweighed*, because they were exceeding many: neither was the weight of the brass found out.

48 And Solomon made all the vessels that *pertain* unto the house of the LORD: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the shewbread *was*.

49 And the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right *side*, and five on the left, before the oracle, with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs *of* gold,

50 And the bowls, and the snuffers, and the

basons, and the spoons, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, *both* for the doors of the inner house, the most holy *place*, and for the doors of the house, *to wit*, of the temple.

51 So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the LORD. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; *even* the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD.

I include the whole within one reading; for one general observation will answer our view of the subject. The whole, no doubt, was typical of the gospel church, of which, in a figurative language, the prophet speaks, that *for brass the Lord would bring gold; and for iron silver; and for wood brass; and for stones iron.* Isaiah lx. 17. And this is literally the case, when the ceremonial ordinances of the Old Testament dispensation give way to the spiritual service of the New. When the shadow is done away in the substance, and the Lord Jesus, preached only in type and figure, became realized in the souls of his people. Think, Reader, of our privileges in Jesus! What were the molten sea, the lavers, or the pots, compared to the fountain of Jesus' blood; the laver of regeneration, by the Holy Ghost; or the Covenant of salvation, given us by God our Father? What services in the temple worship like those venerable institutions of our Jesus; Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord? Here, blessed Redeemer, may my soul constantly seek thy face, and wait on thee continually, calling for thy gracious presence in those sweet words of thy church: *Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.* Song iv. 16.

REFLECTIONS.

MAY we not gather instruction from the view of Solomon's house, and the house of the forest of Lebanon, and from the riches with which he adorned the temple! Surely the house and the forest, may serve to teach us how Jesus and his people dwell together. Here Jesus certainly visits them. Here he secures and defends them! And as the windows are both ornamental and useful; is it not through these that that holy, that fair one, looketh forth at the windows, and sheweth himself through the lattice? And as Jesus looketh in upon our house through the windows of ordinances, and through the lattices of his kind means of grace; do we not look in also, through the same, to him? Reader! do you not know what that means, when the soul is going out after him in desires, when in reading his precious word, singing his praises, attending at the service of ordinances, we send forth the soft, but earnest breathing of the soul, that we love him, long to see him, to be with him, and like children at the windows of a prince, look in to catch if it be but a glimpse of the king in his beauty! Oh! dearest

Lord! what a gracious Sovereign art thou! Thy wonderful condescension, is not barely manifested in sending out thy servants at supper time to call us, from the mere looking in at the windows, to come in and to sit down with thee; but thou comest even to the door of our hearts, and there invitest thyself in, to sup with us, and we with thee. Come then, Lord Jesus, refresh my soul continually with thyself; *thy love is better than wine.*

CHAP. VIII.

CONTENTS.

This is a most beautiful chapter. It contains the dedication of the temple. Solomon's blessing of it: his prayer: his sacrifice of peace-offering: his dismissal of the people with joyful hearts.

THEN Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion.

The temple being finished, preparations are made for the solemn service of bringing up the ark of God into it, as its fixed place of residence. Sweetly are we taught here, that it is the presence of the Lord in the assemblies of his people, which gives glory to all services. If Jesus be not with us, the ordinance is nothing worth. If the ark be not in the temple, all Solomon's labour is lost. His gold is nothing. Reader! let this very opening of the chapter, teach you the infinite importance of exercising an holy jealousy over your heart in all seasons of worship. Where is Jesus? should be the great inquiry, like those Greeks which came up to the temple, whenever we draw nigh the sanctuary or the closet, for prayer or meditation. John xii. 20, 21.

2 And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month.

What a delightful convention of Israel this must have been. Oh! how glorious a sight is it, to see the house of God completely filled!

3 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark.

4 And they brought up the ark of the LORD, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, even those did the priests and the Levites bring up.

5 And king Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, were with

him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude.

6 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy *place*, even under the wings of the cherubims.

7 For the cherubims spread forth *their* two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark, and the staves thereof above.

8 And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy *place* before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day.

The ceremony of fetching the ark, bringing it up, and placing it in the holy place appointed for it, was not done without abundance of sacrifices. Jesus, our Ark, did not enter into the holy place, until by the sacrifice of himself *he had obtained eternal redemption for us*.

9 *There was* nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made *a covenant* with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

It is worthy our closest observation, how particular the Holy Ghost is, in more places than one, in pointing out what was in the ark. Heb. ix. 3—5. Rev. xi. 19. No doubt, as the ark was one of the most expressive types of Jesus, all that was put into the ark had a reference to the fulness contained in Jesus. He is the Covenant itself, and all the blessings included in it. Ephes. i. 22, 23.

10 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy *place*, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD,

11 So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.

It is beautiful to observe, that when the priest came out of the house, and not before, the glory of the divine presence appeared. Jesus is all, and in all, in salvation. Nothing mingled with his righteousness, by way of acceptance. The dark cloud intimated, that while the glory of the Lord was manifested in a cloudy dispensation, it shewed the pre-

sent unripe state of things. But, by the glory of the Lord filling the house, was no less shewn, that the dispensation to come would be brighter: but under both law and gospel, the Lord Jesus is the whole sum and substance of salvation. It is He which filleth all things.

12 ¶ Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.

13 I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.

Solomon, having made all suitable arrangement, and convened all Israel to the dedication of the temple, now opens the solemn service. He first shews them the certainty, and reality of the divine presence being with them, and in confirmation, quotes a well known saying of the Lord, in the book of Leviticus: see Levit. xvi. 2. How delightfully is this (and more strikingly) shewn in the gospel church. *No man hath seen God at any time; but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* John i. 18. Reader! when our God and Saviour is pleased at any time to appear unto us in a cloudy dispensation, still remember he is our God, our Jesus, notwithstanding. The disciples feared, as they entered into the cloud; but the manifestation afterwards was full of glory. Luke ix. 33, 34.

14 And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel: (and all the congregation of Israel stood);

Was not Solomon, in this instance of blessing the congregation, a type of Jesus? Who can behold the king thus engaged, and forget what is said of our King, who in the moment that he was about to ascend, lifted up his hands and blessed the people. Precious Mediator! Thou didst turn towards thy servants, when thou hadst first committed their keeping to thy Father. See Luke xxiv. 50, 51, with John xvii. 11.

15 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it, saying,

16 Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.

17 And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

18 And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house

unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.

19 Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name.

20 And the LORD hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

21 And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein *is* the covenant of the LORD, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

Here is, what may be called, Solomon's sermon, in the dedication of the temple. He calls up the attention of the people to the subject itself. He first opens his mouth in blessing God, as a faithful promise-making, and a promise-performing God. He next adverts to the Lord's gracious design in the building; shewing, that what Solomon had done was in perfect conformity to the Lord's design, and to the Lord's appointment. Hence, the king evidently meant to imply the certainty that the Lord's hand was with him in the building, and would assuredly bless it. He then expresses his joy, in having been blest of the Lord, to finish what he had begun. And in the close of these verses, Solomon not only refers all the praise to God, but all the right of the building. The house is the Lord's. Reader! it is truly lovely in believers, both to see the Lord's hand in all their ways, and as thankfully to acknowledge it. *Of thine own, Lord, we give thee.*

22 ¶ And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:

What a lovely view doth Solomon afford in this attitude! To see, not only priests, but monarchs thus engaged! Never, in any day of Solomon's life, did he appear so truly great! But, Reader! from Solomon, turn to Jesus. Behold Jesus in the memorable night before his sufferings and death, when just about to enter upon that unparalleled service of redemption; *he lifted up his eyes to heaven*, and cried out, *Father! the hour is come.* John xvii. 1.

23 And he said, LORD God of Israel, *there is* no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with

thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart :

24 Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him : thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled *it* with thine hand, as *it is* this day.

25 Therefore now, LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel ; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me.

26 And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father.

27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth ? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee ; how much less this house that I have builded ?

28 Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee to day :

29 That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, *even* toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there : that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.

30 And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place : and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place : and when thou hearest, forgive.

In this former part of Solomon's prayer, I would desire the Reader to remark with me, the *posture* in which it was offered. It is said, he *stood* before the altar. Jesus is our Altar, as well as our High Priest and Sacrifice. Therefore, certainly, it was in view of the glorious Mediator, that Solomon prayed. But it also appears, from what is said

in the further prosecution of this prayer, at the 54th verse, that Solomon when he had finished his prayer, *arose from off his knees*. I am inclined, therefore, to suppose, that when the king began the prayer, he *stood* as is here said, before the altar: but, perhaps, as his mind became more inflamed with the spirit of devotion, he fell on his *knees* as he prosecuted the prayer, and so remained until that he had finished it. But what a vast comprehension of subject matter doth the prayer contain, even in the few verses only already noticed. How doth Solomon enlarge upon the being, and attributes, and perfections of God! How highly doth he speak of him as a God in covenant; here taking into view, the whole Three Persons of Jehovah! How solemnly doth he draw the contrast between the greatness and holiness of the Lord God, whom the heaven, and the heaven of heavens are not worthy to contain, and the littleness of the earth, and all that is in it! And having thus enlarged on the glories of Jehovah, how sweetly, and fervently, doth he plead with God for grace, and the performance of all his covenant promises to David and his seed for ever. Precious Jesus! was Solomon struck with astonishment, in the contemplation that the heaven, and the heaven of heavens had not splendor enough to contain thee; and what a thought is that, to overpower the mind, that thou shouldest tabernacle in our flesh? Reader! I should suppose it impossible for you to overlook the sweet strain of gospel mercies, which runs through the whole of this prayer of Solomon, in the part of it which we have already read; Not to see Jesus in the whole of it, as the sum and substance of the covenant, is to pass over the grand and distinguishing feature, which marks every form of prayer and praise, in which it is expressed. But this is not all. I hope the Reader is so far under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that he instantly beholds Jesus himself, as the one glorious object the pious Israelite is supposed to have in view, in all his prayers and supplications which he made with his eye towards the temple. And I hope that the Reader is no less alive to behold the fullest testimony to that precious doctrine, that *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself*, when he hears Solomon say, that *thine eyes may be open toward thy house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there*. Never, surely, was there more clear gospel, or the Lord Jesus more sweetly looked to with an eye of faith, and the Father's perfect approbation of redemption by him, than in what these verses express in the prayer of Solomon.

31 If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house:

32 Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.

33 When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house:

34 Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers.

35 When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray towards this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them:

36 Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.

37 If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, *or* if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness *there be*;

38 What prayer and supplication soever be *made* by any man, *or* by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house:

39 Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, *even* thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men);

40 That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.

41 Moreover concerning a stranger, that *is* not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake;

42 (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house;

43 Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as *do* thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name.

44 If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shalt pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and *toward* the house that I have built for thy name:

45 Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

46 If they sin against thee, (for *there is* no man that sinneth not), and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near;

47 *Yet* if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness;

48 And *so* return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name:

49 Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause,

50 And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them:

51 For they *be* thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron:

52 That thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee.

53 For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, *to be* thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God.

After the petitions for *general* blessings, as they relate to redemption by the Lord Jesus, to the church at large; Solomon, in this part of his prayer, enters into the cases of a great variety of *particular* mercies, all to the same amount: resting wholly upon the covenant promises of God in Christ, of which this temple was a type. Solomon mentions the case of an appeal by oath, between one man and another, to determine right judgment; the parties looking towards the temple, by way of adjusting what was lawful: he mentions the case of *public* distresses, in national wars, or famine, or pestilence; or the shutting up of the heaven, and no rain given to bring forth the fruits of the earth: he mentions the case of *private* calamity, such as the distress of a man's soul, from a view of the plague of his own heart: he limits not these blessings to Israel, but, no doubt, led by the Holy Ghost to take in the Gentile church also, he includes the case of the stranger, brought to the Lord by the outward report of God's great name, and by the inward drawings of God's great love: he adverts also to the case of war, and points out, that if the Lord's heritage, by reason of sin, should be given up for a time to the scourge of their enemies: on all these instances he dwells particularly. And in short, that Solomon might omit nothing in this earnest cry to God, for being heard by the Lord, by virtue of this temple building, beholding it as pointing to Jesus, and Jesus only; the king, adds, *in all that the people should call upon him for*, his prayer *that God would hear, from heaven his dwelling place, and both answer and forgive.* And, as if still with an eye to Jesus the promised

Seed, in whom, and with whom all blessings could alone be looked for; Solomon closes his prayer with that unanswerable argument for success, that the Lord God had separated his people from all nations: had made them his own; pledged himself to be their God, from the day he had brought them out of the land of Egypt, by Moses. Here, Reader! pause to remark with me, the ground work and foundation of success to all Solomon's petition. Not for desert; not for prayer; not for repentance; no, not for faith, in looking to Jesus, which this temple represented: for all these are the sweet *fruits* and *effects* of God's love; not the *cause* of that love. But it is wholly resulting from covenant grace, and covenant favour, founded and given to Israel, in Christ Jesus before the world began. This is the tenor of the Covenant; *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. Even so, Father*, is our Lord's own gracious conclusion upon it, and throws to the ground all impious and presumptuous reasonings of men: *Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.* Exod. xxxiii. 19. Matt. xi. 26.

54 And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.

How sweet the conclusion to so sweet a prayer. Every part of which was evidently from the awakening and directing grace of the Holy Ghost; all offered with an eye to Jesus; and seeking every blessing from God the Father in his name, and for his sake.

55 ¶ And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying,

56 Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.

57 The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us:

58 That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers.

59 And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he

maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require:

60 That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, *and that there is none else.*

61 Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.

Having spoken to the LORD *for* the people; he again now speaks *to* the people from the LORD; that is, still with an eye to Jesus, he watches in prayer, well-assured that the blessings implored will come: God hath never yet out-promised himself, but of all his good promises, not a word hath failed. Thus, in the experience of the past, faith finds the greatest encouragement for all that is to come. And while we look to God's faithfulness, may we look to him for grace also for our own! This is to have our heart perfect with the LORD.

62 ¶ And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD.

63 And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the LORD, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD.

64 The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that *was* before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings: because the brasen altar that *was* before the LORD *was* too little to receive the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings.

Prayer, you observe, was followed with sacrifice. As if to shew, that whether in one service or another; all is done with an eye to Christ, the Great Sacrifice, who *by his one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* Heb. x. 14. We read that the Lord answered by fire from heaven. See 2 Chron. vii. 1.

65 And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt,

before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days, *even* fourteen days.

Observe, how sanctified blessings produced joy. Not the frothy, frivolous, unholy feasts of carnal men, but the solemn thanksgiving seasons of the gracious. Oh! how different from the feasts of multitudes who call themselves Christians, who make the festivals of their church like festivals of the heathens, and literally convert holy seasons into revels of sin.

66 On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.

See, Reader! after all the great events of this chapter, the separation and departure. Oh! that your heart, and my heart, from this view of the subject, may be led upward, to contemplate that joyful meeting, and to long for it, where we shall go out no more. And in the mean time, as the Israelites are said to have blessed the king, and rejoiced for all the goodness the Lord had shewn to David, and to Israel; oh! let us, at the close of all ordinances, and all means of grace, bless God our Father for all the goodness, grace, and mercy he hath shewn us in David's Lord and King, our adored Redeemer; in having established his throne, an everlasting throne, and a kingdom which shall be for ever. And oh! for that mercy to eternal life, which the apostle looked for, and which the people of God shall assuredly enjoy; that, *receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, we may have grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.* Heb. xii. 28.

REFLECTIONS.

SOLOMON! I would honour thy memory with great honour, for the view which the blessed Spirit hath been pleased to give me of thy ministry, as set forth in the dedication of the temple. Surely, never didst thou appear so truly great, as in this instance, where thou art represented so truly humble. Thou hast shewn herein, a dignity well meriting imitation: and manifested, that the most supreme station any mortal can be advanced to in life, is to minister as the servant of Jehovah.

But while I behold Solomon thus honoured of his Lord, I would pass over all thoughts of the servant, to contemplate the Master. Thou, dearest Jesus! art formed to eclipse all creature excellence. Even Solomon's temple was but a faded glory, had it not been for the representation it made of thee, and of thy redemption. Oh! precious structure, the temple of thy body! Oh! sacred building, not made with hands. United to the God-head, the foundation is eternally sure, and all the blessings contained in it, endless blessings to our souls. Here, dearest Lord! in thee I see security from all evils whensoever, or wheresoever, any poor sinner who feels and knows the plague of his own heart, directs the eye of faith to thee for salvation. Though he tres-

pass against his neighbour; though he trespass against his own soul; though he transgress against the Lord his God; and though he be carried away captive by his spiritual enemies, far from the land of his fathers; yet, if from thence, his whole heart and his whole soul be directed to Jesus, Jesus will hear from heaven, the habitation of his holiness and his glory; for he hath said, *Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else, beside me there is no Saviour!* Help me then, dearest Jesus, to have mine eyes and my whole heart eternally fixed on thee. It is thy gracious office to know all my circumstances, to direct all my ways, to observe, to pity, to regard, and still to love me in every state and every case. Oh! Lord God! let not only my eyes, but the eyes of all poor sinners, whose redemption thou hast purchased with thy blood, be gazing upon thee with holy longing, fervent waiting and continual desire: and even under the most discouraging circumstances, even if, like Jonah, I am tempted at any time to exclaim, *I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes;* yet, like him, to have faith still to say, *I will look again towards thine holy temple.* Oh! let that precious experience in thy blessed word be mine; in which it is said; *they looked unto him and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed.* *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.*

CHAP. IX.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter relates the gracious circumstance of the Lord's second appearance to Solomon. An interview takes place between Solomon and Hiram. Solomon's yearly sacrifices are also mentioned in the close of this chapter.

AND it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do,

2 That the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon.

3 And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hollowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

4 And if thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in up-

rightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, *and* wilt keep my statutes and my judgments:

5 Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.

6 *But* if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments *and* my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them:

7 Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people:

8 And at this house, *which* is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and to this house?

9 And they shall answer, Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the Lord brought upon them all this evil.

What can be equally precious to a believing soul, as the intercourse which is kept up at a mercy seat? It was not enough, in the Lord's esteem, that he condescended to answer Solomon and his people, on the great day of the dedication, by consuming the sacrifices they offered with fire, which was always considered, in the old church, the highest token of divine approbation; (see 2 Chron. vii. 1—3) but God graciously afforded a private visit, in the visions of the night, to Solomon. Oh! precious Jesus! thou art the same to thy people yesterday, to-day, and for ever; grant the same sweet tokens of thy love in the silence of the night, when no eye seeth, as in the public ordinances of the day, when the eyes of all the people, as the eyes of one man, are towards the Lord! Thou dost give songs in the night. Job xxxv. 10. This was the second visit of the Lord. And what was the purport of the visit, explained on gospel

principles? Is it not, that the eyes and the heart of Jehovah, are for ever looking with complacency and delight upon him whom this temple of Solomon represented? Oh! delightful thought! In Jesus his church is perpetually and everlastingly beheld and accepted. How sweetly the prophet describes it; *Behold the man whose name is the Branch: he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory.* Zech. vi. 12, 13. Reader! observe very particularly, the sin of covenant breaking, to which the Lord refers; going and serving other gods. This is strikingly contrasted with the conduct of David, who, amidst all his transgressions, never fell into idolatry. The Lord foreseeing the events which were to follow in the after life of Solomon, and the Babylonish captivity, for the apostacy of Israel, here most clearly pointed out the sure consequence. But let the Reader also observe, how gracious the provision for Israel's recovery, by the sovereignty of his own grace, when chastisements should have taken place, and by virtue of his covenant engagements. This is more fully and circumstantially set forth in the 89th Psalm; to which I beg the Reader to turn: Psalm lxxxix. 28—35.

10 ¶ And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD, and the king's house,

11 (Now Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees and fir trees, and with gold, according to all his desire), that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee.

The amity between these princes may serve to teach us, the happy state of Solomon's reign. Such, Reader, would be the blessed effects in the reign of Jesus, if all his followers felt his sweet constraining grace. Isaiah lxxv. 25.

12 And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not.

13 And he said, What cities *are* these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day.

14 And Hiram sent to the king sixscore talents of gold.

We are not to suppose that this displeasure of Hiram, carried with it the smallest anger; so far from it, that he called Solomon brother, while expressing his disapprobation of those cities. But the sense is, that Hiram's pursuits in trade and navigation, differed so widely from agriculture and husbandry, that those cities were not at all suited to the genius of the men of Tyre. Hiram gave them again to Solomon; for so we read, 2 Chron. viii. 2.

15 And this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the LORD, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.

16 For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it for a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife.

17 And Solomon built Gezer, and Beth-horon the nether,

18 And Baalath and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land,

19 And all the cities of store that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

20 And all the people *that were* left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, which *were* not of the children of Israel,

21 Their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute of bondservice unto this day.

22 But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondmen: but they *were* men of war, and his servants, and his princes, and his captains, and rulers of his chariots, and his horsemen.

23 These *were* the chief of the officers that *were* over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, which bare rule over the people that wrought in the work.

24 But Pharaoh's daughter came up out of the city of David unto her house which Solomon had built for her: then did he build Millo.

I detain not the Reader with any further observation upon these verses, than just to remark how much they teach us the importance of

building for eternity. What a great account here is, of many cities, many inhabitants, much employment; and what is the sum total of all but vanity and vexation of spirit. So Solomon himself draws the conclusion; and so must every wise man. Eccles. ii. 4—11. Blessed Jesus! give me grace to build on thee, the foundation stone in Zion, *an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. Lord! grant that it may be found this is mine, like thy servant, 2 Cor. v. 1.

25 ¶ And three times in a year did Solomon offer burnt offerings and peace offerings upon the altar which he built unto the LORD, and he burnt incense upon the altar that *was* before the LORD. So he finished the house.

I charge the Reader not to overlook this verse. You see that all Solomon's buildings, all his government concerns, and all his own domestic engagements, diverted not his mind from the observance of the divine law concerning sacrifices. Surely these were with an eye to Jesus. Deut. xvi. 16.

26 And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which *is* beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom.

27 And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon.

28 And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought *it* to king Solomon.

It is supposed, and not without good reason, that the Ophir here spoken of, is the same with what is now called Ceylon, in the East Indies. But, Reader, what is the golden wedge of Ophir, compared to the preciousness of Jesus. Isaiah xiii. 12. It is worthy the Reader's remark, that Judea, the Holy land, and what is called the glory of all lands, had no gold. And as the land, so the people of God. What are they, and who are they that are the excellent of the earth? James tells us, *they are the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*. James ii. 5. Reader! see to it, that you are of this description. Remember who God's poor are: not simply poor in outward circumstances, but poor in spirit. Jesus' followers. This is to do as Solomon, after all his attainments, recommended. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, (says he), that is Jesus; for Jesus is the wisdom of God, and the power of God; *and the man that getteth understanding; for the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold*. Prov. iii. 14.

REFLECTIONS.

CHIEFLY, and above every thing related in this chapter, let my soul ponder over the wondrous condescension of God to Solomon, in what

is here said of this *second* manifestation to him of his grace and love. And while I mark the tender mercy so shewn, let me not forget that *such honour have all his saints*. Yes! blessed Jesus, though not equally splendid, yet equally certain, equally gracious, are thy visits. For thou hast left it upon record as if to silence all doubts and unbelief, that *he that loveth thee shall be loved of thy Father*, and thou hast added in that assurance, *I will love him, and will manifest myself to him*. Oh! wonderous love! oh! matchless grace! Lord how is it that thou dost manifest thyself unto thy people, and not unto the world!

We are not astonished, O ye carnal men, that you should gaze with such amazement as ye sometimes do at the followers of our Jesus! that we are (as David said) a wonder, to many is not so strange, since we are a wonder to ourselves. That we are born from above; that God condescends to acknowledge us for his children by adoption and by grace; that Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brethren; and the Holy Ghost makes our bodies his temple: when we think of these things, and consider our high calling; when we look within our hearts, and behold such coldness, deadness, and the want of affection to him, who hath so loved us as to beget us by his glorious redemption and his Father's grace to such an inheritance, oh! how passing in wonder must be the love of God which passeth knowledge!

My brother in Jesus! you I address, who profess to live in the hope and faith of these precious, these distinguished privileges! think, I charge you, (and while I charge you I desire to feel the full force of it upon my own heart) think, *what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!* Was the Lord thus gracious to Solomon? Did he appear to him twice? Did he solemnly charge him to flee from idolatry, and a breach of his holy covenant? Oh! then, let us consider the infinite importance of living to him who hath purchased our redemption with his blood; whose we are, and to whom we belong. If under the Old Testament dispensation of types and shadows, God was so jealous of his honour; can you suppose that now the whole is confirmed and sealed to us, as it is in the New Testament revelation of his blood, that he is less jealous of his honour, or that he will give his glory to graven images? Oh! my brother! if the Lord hath manifested himself to our hearts, and the grace of God hath appeared unto us, let us never forget what that grace teacheth, and what high claims are upon us; namely, that *denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

CHAP. X.

CONTENTS.

An interesting relation is given, in the opening of this chapter, of a visit made to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba, drawn by the report of his great wisdom. Solomon's riches are again noticed in this chapter.

AND when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.

As Sheba lay to the south of Canaan, and probably was on the sea coast, where the ships of Hiram, or Solomon, might have touched for provisions or water; there is no great difficulty in conceiving how the report of Solomon's greatness and wisdom gained knowledge in the court of Sheba. Our dear Lord hath conferred the highest honour on this woman, in noticing her on this account in the gospel. Luke xi. 31. But I beg the Reader to remark with me, that the expression in this verse of the occasion of this Queen of the South's visit seems to have been not so much to discover the natural wisdom of Solomon, as his gracious knowledge in divine things concerning the name of the Lord. Is it not more than probable that her visit was on a religious account, and that she was anxious for her soul?

2 And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

The state in which she came, if we consider the subject in a religious point of view, becomes no unapt representation of the soul's first approach to Jesus, before that God the Holy Ghost hath brought the sinner into a real acquaintance with his own heart. Oh! how apt are we to come to Jesus in our best things. And what a beautiful representation of an awakened sinner's mind is here given, in that all the heart is laid open before Jesus. That this woman was led by the Lord to this enquiry is, I think, plain from what our blessed Lord saith concerning her, that she shall rise up in judgment, and condemn the men of that generation in which Jesus came; for she came so far to hear of the Lord from the mouth of Solomon, when they neglected to ask of Jesus when he was present with them. Luke xi. 31.

3 And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not *any* thing hid from the king, which he told her not.

How fully and satisfactorily doth the Lord Jesus tell the poor sinner all that is in his heart, when he manifesteth himself to him otherwise than he doeth to the world. Every one that hath been with Jesus can bear testimony to this, and like the Samaritan woman, can certify this is Christ, by such an unfolding of the heart. See John iv. 29.

4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,

5 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of

his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.

6 And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.

7 Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it*: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

8 Happy *are* thy men, happy *are* these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, *and* that hear thy wisdom.

9 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.

Reader! if such were the surprizing effects wrought on the mind of this woman in the view of Solomon, and his wisdom and grandeur; think if it be possible what surprize will overpower the soul when we arrive at the court of our Jesus above; when we come into a perfect knowledge of the wisdom of our Jesus; the house which he hath formed for himself, which is his body, his temple, his people: when we shall behold him as the Lamb in the midst of the throne feeding his church, and leading them to fountains of living waters; the attendance of his angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; their apparel in the garments of his salvation, and his robes of righteousness: oh! how will our whole spirits be overpowered amidst the Hallelujahs of heaven, when every knee shall bow before him, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father! How delightful are her expressions of holy joy and rapture! and what a beautiful order is observed in them. Solomon's men are happy; his servants yet more so, who are continually near his person. But above all, blessed is the Author and Giver of all. It is sweet and refreshing at all times to bless God for his mercies; and to delight in the instruments by which those mercies come to us. But oh! with what tenfold sweetness do gracious souls bless the God of their mercies. And in this view, how infinitely precious is it to behold the hand of God our Father in all our blessings in Christ Jesus. Reader! never, never omit, I charge you, to eye the Father in the Son; and to look at Jesus as the Sent, and Sealed, and the precious Gift of Jehovah!

10 And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and

precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.

11 And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones.

12 And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day.

13 And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside *that* which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.

And is there not a mutual exchange made between the Saviour and the sinner? Though you and I, Reader, have nothing to offer, nothing but what we have first received from our God, and of his own, whatever we present, we can only give him; yet our Jesus graciously accepts at our hands and hearts our poor offerings, being made acceptable to our God and Father in him the beloved. And while we present to him our choicest offerings, think what a profusion of blessings he bestows on us. So that we barter our emptiness for his fulness; our weakness for his strength; our darkness for his light; our pollution for his holiness. And *he is made of God to us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that all our glorying may be in the Lord.* 1 Chron. i. 30.

14 ¶ Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold,

15 Beside *that he had* of the merchantmen, and of the traffick of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country.

16 And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred *shekels* of gold went to one target.

17 And *he made* three hundred shields of beaten gold; three pound of gold went to one shield; and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

18 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold.

19 The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne *was* round behind: and *there were* stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays.

20 And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom.

21 And all king Solomon's drinking vessels *were* of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon *were of* pure gold; none *were of* silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

22 For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

23 So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.

24 And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.

25 And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.

26 And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem.

27 And the king made silver *to be* in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he *to be* as the sycamore trees that *are* in the vale, for abundance.

28 And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price.

29 And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred *shekels* of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty : and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring *them* out by their means.

I include the whole of these verses within one view, because they all refer to one and the same subject ; namely, the grandeur and riches of Solomon. The Holy Ghost perhaps by this account intends to instruct the church in the incompetency of riches and earthly splendour, to give happiness. Solomon himself was a most lovely evidence of it. For it was at the moment when he was thus exalted in splendour, that he wrote those solemn sentences in his book of Ecclesiastes, to shew that the whole is but vanity and vexation of spirit. Reader! do mark it down as a maxim, which the universal voice of mankind in all ages hath decided with the clearest evidence; that the whole world in possession cannot satisfy a soul, void of an interest in God's covenant love. Unless Jesus be in our earthly comforts, be they what they may, there is no real enjoyment in them. It is Jesus which must put a sweetness, and give a real relish to all. If I have him this heightens all creature comforts, and makes up the want of all creature enjoyments. Look therefore, Reader, for the Lord Jesus whenever worldly prosperity is at the highest, or when adversity surrounds you. When I am most happy, is it because Jesus is near? When matters frown, doth Jesus smile? Oh! it is precious to make him the foundation, as God the Father hath made him in all our blessings. *Men shall be blessed in him.* Psalm lxxii. 17. It is precious to make him the substance of all our happiness, as he himself saith; *I cause them that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures.* Prov. viii. 21. It is precious to make him the one enjoyment of all our comforts; because his presence and blessing is absolutely necessary to make all blessings blessings indeed. *Unless the Lord lift up the light of his countenance, who, or what creature, can shew us any good?* Psalm iv. 6. And it is precious to have Jesus for our portion, that when the streams of all earthly comforts fail; when neither the fig-tree blossom, nor fruit be in the vine, we may then *rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation.* Heb. iii. 17, 18.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! added to the view we have taken in this chapter of Solomon's wisdom and greatness, as a shadow of him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; are we not led by what we have read to behold in this Queen of the south, thus coming to Solomon, a picture of the whole Gentile church coming to Christ? Was it not a promise of our covenant God concerning him, that *Gentiles should come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising?* And in allusion to the same blessed and glorious event, did not the Lord Jehovah promise that *the multitude of camels should cover him; the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; that all they from Sheba should come, they should*

bring gold and incense, and shew forth the praises of the Lord. And how is the mind overpowered in the contemplation, when we behold these great predictions accomplished in the first fruits of the wise men from the East coming to Christ in the moment of his Incarnation; and now in the dispensation of the fullness of times the Lord gathering together in one all things in Christ?

But Reader! while our souls are deeply impressed with the contemplation of the stupendous blessings and mercies in Jesus; shall we not advance one step higher in the wonderful subject, and look at Jesus himself thus gloriously shadowed forth in the several striking features of Solomon king of Israel? As far as the excellencies of Solomon go, they were surely descriptive of Solomon's Lord God, and Saviour. And here (though not in the infirmities of the man) as we read the relation (but in the wisdom of the king) we are constrained to cry out in the representation, and say, *a greater than Solomon is here.* Yes! blessed Jesus; as the Lord sent by the hand of Nathan to David, and at the birth of Solomon called him *Jedidiah*, beloved of the Lord; so by a voice from heaven at thy gracious entrance upon the work the Father gave thee to do, thou wert declared to be the true Jedidiah; the beloved Son of God, in whom the soul of thy Father was well pleased. And thy wisdom hath not only called forth the whole earth to admire and adore; but all the powers of heaven join to acknowledge thee to be the power of God, and the wisdom of God, for salvation to every one that believeth. Thy kingdom was but faintly represented by the peaceful reign of Solomon; for of the increase of thy government and peace, there is, there can be no end. Well may every true believer, like the Queen of Sheba, and yet in higher notes of gratitude, love and praise, exult and say; Happy are thy redeemed ones; happy are thy servants who minister in thy great name, and stand continually before thee! And blessed be the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who hath constituted our Jesus the Solomon of his people, and hath given him an everlasting kingdom, and a dominion that ruleth over all. Lord! hasten thy kingdom, and thy glory; take to thyself thy great name, and rule and reign for ever.

CHAP. XI.

CONTENTS.

A melancholy account is here given of Solomon's fall. His many wives and concubines, in his old age, lead him into idolatry. The Lord's displeasure. Solomon's chastisement, and death. An account of his successor in the kingdom.

BUT king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites;

What an awful account doth this chapter begin with concerning Solomon. Observe in what the evil opens; the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Not only many bad women, but

many *strange* women; that is haters of the God of Israel, concerning which the Lord had strictly commanded Israel never to intermarry. Deut. vii. 2—4.

2 Of the nations *concerning* which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: *for* surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.

3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.

4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of David his father.

5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as *did* David his father.

7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that *is* before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

It is worth remarking how subtle the enemy of souls acted upon Solomon. Had Solomon begun without the instrumentality of women exciting his lusts, to depart from the Lord, the strength of his temptation would have been lessened. But by this inlet to the corruptions of nature he gradually paved the way for idolatry. So Balaam advised Moab concerning Israel. The daughters of Moab fascinated the poor Israelites by their charms, and when once they had been brought to prostitute their bodies, the transition was soon made to the prostitution of their souls. Compare Numbers xxv. 1, 2. Rev. ii. 14. But Reader! pause over the alarming account as it refers to Solomon. Well may every one that reads it cry out, Lord! what is man! Is this Solomon, the beloved, the Jedidiah of the Lord? Is this he who built the temple; and now over against it sets up an high place for the dung-

hill idol of Moab! Oh! precious, precious Jesus! I would say for myself and Reader, Keep us, dearest Lord, keep us by thine almighty power through faith unto salvation!

9 ¶ And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,

10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded.

11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: *but* I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; *but* will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

Reader! let me beg you to make all suitable improvement of what is here contained within these verses. And may the Holy Ghost bless the reading of it to both our souls. Observe! how aggravated the sin of Solomon was, because it was in direct opposition to the former gracious manifestations the Lord had condescended to make him. And observe also how the Lord keeps account how often he visits his people. Sweet thought to the believer! Jesus marks down in his book of remembrance all his gracious love visits, though our forgetful hearts pass them by. And observe, moreover, from this passage, how very piercing the sins of believers are, above all others, to the heart of Jesus. Reader! think of this as it concerns yourself. Hath the Lord Jesus manifested himself otherwise to you than he doth to the world? hath God the Father given you Jesus? Hath the Holy Spirit set his love upon you, and opened to your view the glories of Jesus? And must not every act of unkindness after such tokens of special and distinguishing favour, be very, very cutting to the heart of so gracious a God? Hath not such a God in covenant a right to demand more from such souls than from all the unenlightened nations of the earth? May not every disobedient child of God hear that expostulating voice speaking to him after every transgression; "I awakened thee from darkness, delivered thee from Satan, gave thee redemption, and Jesus with all his mercies; for which of all these blessings is it, that thou thus rebellest against me?" But Reader! in the midst of our view of Solomon's cry-

ing sins, and the Lord's judgment, do observe how the name of David is introduced, as the cause for which he shall find mercy. And thus in the covenant of redemption for the sake of David's Lord, the gracious terms are the same. Sweet thought! both from our relation to Jesus, our Spiritual Head and Surety; and from the ransom Jehovah hath received in him; believers though chastened, are saved. See that sweet scripture; Psalm lxxxix. 30—37.

14 ¶ And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he *was* of the king's seed in Edom.

15 For it came to pass, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every male in Edom;

16 (For six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom:)

17 That Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt; Hadad *being* yet a little child.

18 And they arose out of Midian, and came to Paran: and they took men with them out of Paran, and they came to Egypt, unto Pharaoh king of Egypt; which gave him an house, and appointed him victuals, and gave him land.

19 And Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him to wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen.

20 And the sister of Tahpenes bare him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house: and Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh.

21 And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the host was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country.

22 Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou

seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, Nothing: howbeit let me go in any wise.

God had said that he would chastise David's son with the rod of men, if he swerved from his duty; and the Lord can never long want an instrument for the accomplishment of the purposes of his will, whenever this is the case. See 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15.

23 And God stirred him up *another* adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer, king of Zobah:

24 And he gathered men unto him, and became captain over a band, when David slew them of *Zobah*: and they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus.

25 And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad *did*: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.

Observe, that though both Hadad, as one of the seed of Edom, and Rezon, the Syrian, were alike natural foes to Israel; yet it is the Lord's hand that is here pointed out as raising them up. Yes! the devil and all his host, though sworn foes against God, and his Christ, can wage no war while the Lord restrains. Oh! it is proper in all our visitations humbly to enquire of the Lord concerning the affliction that, as Job saith, *we may say unto God, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* Job x. 2; and xxxiv. 32.

26 And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name *was* Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up *his* hand against the king.

Here is first introduced the person of Jeroboam, of whom, in after ages, such an awful character is given. When the Lord chastiseth his children, as in the case of Solomon, what detestable characters, as instruments, he is pleased sometimes to make use of.

27 And this *was* the cause that he lifted up *his* hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, *and* repaired the breaches of the city of David his father.

28 And the man Jeroboam *was* a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph

Those particulars concerning Jeroboam are here spoken of, as the cause, according to the mind of the man, for which he became Solomon's enemy; but we know that the thing was of the Lord.

29 And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two *were* alone in the field:

30 And Ahijah caught the new garment that *was* on him, and rent it *in* twelve pieces:

31 And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:

32 (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel):

33 Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do *that which* is right in mine eyes, and *to keep* my statutes and my judgments, as *did* David his father.

34 Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes:

35 But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, *even* ten tribes.

36 And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there.

37 And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign

according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel.

38 And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do *that is* right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.

39 And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever.

The sweetest and most precious part, and to be regarded with peculiar emphasis on our minds in the reading of those verses is, the cause assigned why only ten tribes, and not the whole of Israel, should be in the hands of Jeroboam; namely, because in the seed and lineage of David Christ was to come. Hence David's stock must not be lost; that lamp must not be put out, but preserved for God's anointed. Sweet consideration! and Reader! do not overlook at the same time the precious interest all the spiritual seed of our Jesus have in it. In Jesus all his people, all his seed, are equally preserved. So Jehovah hath said, and so his people ought most firmly to keep in remembrance upon all occasions. See that blessed scripture to this effect; Isaiah lix. 21. Reader! mark it down. The blessing is still in it. "Destroy it not," one saith; for Jesus's sake, Jehovah's servant, it shall be preserved. Isaiah lxxv. 8.

40 Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

No doubt as the prophet Ahijah had signified the advance of Jeroboam, the king became acquainted with it, alas! how could Solomon be led away to conceive his weak attempts should be able to defeat the Lord's designs.

41 ¶ And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, *are* they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?

42 And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel *was* forty years.

43 ¶ And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

Here ends the history of Solomon, and which is the history of all men. *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.* Not so thy

death, thou glorious Solomon of thy people; for by thy death thou hast overcome death, and hast opened views beyond the grave, of the everlasting mansions of the blessed. Thy soul was not left in hell, neither did thy flesh see corruption. Hail! thou glorious, all-conquering Lord! Psalm xvi. 10.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! in the fall of Solomon let us learn what human nature is in its highest attainments. Who that beheld Solomon in his dedication of the temple; who that heard his sweet and gracious prayer on that occasion; who that contemplated the Lord God in his condescending visits, and revelations, and promises, to him; would ever have conceived the thought that this wonder of wisdom, this devout, highly favoured servant of the Lord, should have apostatized to such an extreme length, as not only to drown his body in filthy lusts, but sink his soul into idolatry. Oh! sad instance of human depravity! *Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon!*

But Reader! when you and I have duly pondered over Solomon's history, let us look at our own. *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall!* Lord! give me to see, and feelingly to acknowledge, that by nature all men are the same. All equally prone to evil; and all, but for the blessed influences of preventing and restraining grace, subject to the same sin and condemnation. Oh! dearest Jesus! let a deep sense and conviction of this truth lead my whole heart to thee! Lord! *keep thy servant from presumptuous sins, that I may be innocent from the great transgression.*

But principally, and above all, blessed Lord! let the view this chapter holds forth of Solomon direct my soul to the clearest and most settled conviction, that as all have sinned, and come short of thy glory; so nothing but thy precious blood and righteousness can be the sinners refuge, and the sinners salvation. Yes! blessed Jesus! do thou fix and engrave in my heart this most unquestionable truth. It is thou, and thou only, whose finished work in redemption hath made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. May it be my happy portion to be found in thee, having redemption in thy blood, the forgiveness of all sins, according to the riches of that grace, whereby we are made accepted in the beloved!

CHAP. XII.

CONTENTS.

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, succeeds to the kingdom. He begins his reign in refusing the old men's counsel, and follows that of young men. Ten tribes of Israel revolt. The chapter concludes with an account of Jeroboam's idolatry.

AND Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king.

It should seem that Solomon though he had so many wives, had but this one son. There was no dispute therefore about his succession to the kingdom.

2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard *of it*, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;)

3 That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying,

4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.

After what hath been related concerning Jeroboam in the former chapter, there can be but little doubt that he came and addressed the king in the spirit of rebellion. The complaint which he gave concerning Solomon, was true, if the people meant it respecting his idolatry. But otherwise never was so prosperous a reign, nor one less oppressive.

5 And he said unto them, Depart yet *for* three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.

6 And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?

7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, *and* which stood before him:

9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter?

10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* lighter unto us ; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins.

11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke : my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

Though Solomon himself was the wisest of men, yet it should seem he had the most foolish of sons. By his folly in listening to the counsel of rash young men, he actually seemed to allow that his father had been a tyrant, but that he would exceed him in oppression.

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.

13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him ;

14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke : my father *also* chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

15 Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people ; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

This last verse throws a light upon this whole transaction ; the cause was from the Lord ! that is, the Lord left him to his own devices ; and these were only evil. And Reader ! is not this the very case of those who reject the counsel of God against their own souls ; and in turning a deaf ear to the blessed truths of the gospel, justly bring down the judgment of condemnation upon themselves. That is a most awful scripture which tells us, that the very same blessed gospel, which to some is the savour of life unto life, becomes to others the savour of death unto death. The same fire which melts wax will harden clay. 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

16 ¶ So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither *have we* inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

17 But *as for* the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who *was* over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

20 And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

What I particularly desire the Reader to remark with me in these verses is the honour with which Judah is mentioned, as adhering to the house of David. And while the Reader makes this remark, let him connect with it the recollection that *our Lord sprang out of Judah.* Heb. vii. 14.

21 And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

22 But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

23 Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying,

24 Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up,

nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel; return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.

Let the Reader remark also here how the Lord overruled the minds of his people, and kept them from slaughter by the ministry of his servant Shemaiah.

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel.

26 ¶ And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David :

27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan.

31 And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made.

33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

The awful character of Jeroboam, which the Holy Ghost in after ages marked with such peculiar spots of infamy, can hardly be contemplated but with horror. His daring impiety in setting up those golden calves, seems to have been intended, not only to lead the minds of the then generation from the Lord; but also by way of approbation of the idolatry of their fathers in Horeb, which Moses recorded, and the psalmist so pathetically mourned over. *Exod. xxxii. 4. Psalm cvi. 19, 20.* His contempt of the priesthood also was manifested in taking for priests of the lowest of the people. His contempt of the temple itself in setting up a place of his own. And his contempt of the solemn seasons which the Lord had enjoined in altering the very day of the month. And add to all, his invading the sacred office in himself, consecrating his creatures, in the priestly office. So that among all the characters we meet with in history of daring, unblushing impiety, Jeroboam stands foremost. And especially, if we recollect how all the appointments in the service of the temple were considered as shadows of a better dispensation, and had an eye to Christ, here his conduct riseth to the highest possible pitch of blasphemy as well as profaneness! But if in those remote ages the Lord regarded with such anger the despisers who treated the symbols of his sanctuary with disregard; what an awful state are those gospel despisers in, who set up the idols of their own imaginations in their hearts, and refuse both him that spake from earth, and now speaketh from heaven. From all hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word and commandment, good Lord deliver us!

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT a sad page for the most painful reflection doth the Holy Ghost give us in the view of Rehoboam's folly and Jeroboam's sin! what a train of evil is induced by the fall! what is every man by nature but blind, ignorant, wayward, and perverse! Reader! have you ever remarked how sinners, like Jeroboam, work all uncleanness with greediness? Like soldiers in Satan's army; they enlist under his banner; they wear his uniform; they volunteer in his service; they cloath themselves with his armour, and wield the weapons of sin, enmity and malice. And unless recovered out of the snare of the devil, if living and dying in his service, their end must be destruction, and their wages everlasting death.

Precious, precious Jesus! what everlasting thanks hath my soul to offer to thee, thou great and glorious captain of my salvation, in that thou hast, at no less expence than thine own blood and life, brought me out of his slavish ranks, and made me free indeed in thy service. Oh! Lord! give me grace to reverence thy temple, thine ordinances, thine

house of prayer, thy sabbaths; and never more, like Jeroboam, set up in my poor heart any idol of abomination. Let every imagination be cast down, and every high thing that would exalt itself against the knowledge of God, be taken away, and let every thought be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Be thou, dearest Lord, every thing to me that is precious; and do thou reign and rule in my heart, *the hope of glory!*

CHAP. XIII.

CONTENTS.

A prophet cometh to Beth-el. Jeroboam, in opposing him, hath his hand withered; which at the prayer of the man of God is restored. The prophet himself for his disobedience is afterwards slain by a lion. Jeroboam still continueth hardened.

AND, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

It should seem that Jeroboam the king was in the very act of profanation and idolatry when this man of God came in the Lord's name with this solemn commission.

2 And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.

3 And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This *is* the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that *are* upon it shall be poured out.

Let us pause to admire the faithfulness of the Lord's servant in thus executing his warrant in the king's presence. Observe how he executed his commission. He cried no doubt with a loud voice. And observe to whom he spake; not to man, but to the altar. When men refuse to hear we find the Lord calling upon the inanimate parts of creation to attend. That is a beautiful instance in point, *Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth.* Isaiah i. 2. The prophecy he delivered was not to take place for more than 350 years, and yet the prophet mentions the very name of the prince by whom it should be accomplished. But perhaps what galled Jeroboam most was, that the house of David was so honourably spoken of. Yes! what galls Satan and his race most, is Jesus's name and cross. Here, Reader, therefore, let you and I, like Paul, glory. Gal. vi. 14.

4 And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Beth-el, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.

5 The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

Observe, to what a daring height of impiety was the king arrived. Alas! how doth sin harden the heart. Think Reader! what effect must the sinew-struck hand of the king, and the pouring out of the ashes, with the altar's rending, have had upon the minds of the spectators. But we do not hear of any one act of conversion wrought by it. No! until the Lord turns the heart, the most awful signs lose their power. When our dear Lord on the cross bowed his sacred head, and with a loud voice, that all in heaven and hell might hear, said; *It is finished*; though not the altar only was smitten, but the veil of the temple divided, and rocks rent, and the graves opened, yet we read of no heart being rent, nor a soul, except the dying thief, converted. Oh! to what a state of obduracy hath sin hardened the soul!

6 ¶ And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it *was* before.

Observe, Jeroboam prays the prophet to intercede for the recovery of his *hand*, but not his *heart*. Like another Pharaoh, he desired the punishment to be taken off, but not a word of the Lord's taking off the cause. And yet what could testify the merciful tenderness of the Lord to pardon sin more than thus instantly restoring Jeroboam's hand at the instance of his servant. Precious Jesus! was not this interceding of the prophet a type of the ever-prevailing efficacy of thy intercession at the right hand of power, for the poor withered souls of thy people?

7 And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward.

8 And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go

in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place:

9 For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.

10 So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Beth-el.

No doubt, this part of the Lord's command to the prophet was to testify his abhorrence of idols. And it became a test of his fidelity.

11 Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Beth-el: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father.

The character of this man is not far to fetch. Had he been a true prophet of the Lord how could he live in Beth-el, and be witness to Jeroboam's continued iniquity, without reproving him? Hence, therefore, in the very opening of his history it is easy to discover that he was of the false prophets. And we read not only of Jezebel's prophets, but of the prophets of Samaria, who caused the Lord's people to err. See 1 Kings xviii. 19. Jeremiah xxiii. 13, 14. With this view of the real character of this old prophet, as he is called, we shall be now better able to enter into a proper apprehension of the circumstances of the whole history.

12 And their father said unto them, What way went he? for his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah.

13 And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon,

14 And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, *Art* thou the man of God that camest from Judah? and he said, *I am*.

15 Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread,

16 And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place:

17 For it was said to me by the word of the

LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest.

18 He said unto him, I *am* a prophet also as thou *art*; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. *But* he lied unto him.

19 So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.

20 And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came unto the prophet that brought him back:

21 And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee,

22 But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which *the LORD* did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.

23 ¶ And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, *to wit*, for the prophet whom he had brought back.

24 And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase.

25 And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcase cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcase: and they came and told *it* in the city where the old prophet dwelt.

26 And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard *thereof*, he said, *It is* the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word

of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him.

27 And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled *him*.

28 And he went and found his carcase, cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the ass.

29 And the prophet took up the carcase of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn and to bury him.

30 And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, *saying*, Alas, my brother!

31 And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God *is* buried; lay my bones beside his bones:

32 For the saying which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Beth-el, and against all the houses of the high places which *are* in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.

I do not detain the Reader through the whole of this relation, because general observations upon the whole should seem to be most suited to our present conception of things, and the gracious design of the Holy Ghost in causing such events to be recorded. There can be no question, I think, from what is here said of this old prophet but that he was not a prophet of the Lord. And yet some difficulty will still occur to reconcile this conviction with what is said of him in the 20th verse; that *the word of the Lord came to him*. But in answer to this difficulty I would observe; is it not possible for the Lord to make use even of his enemies sometimes, as suits the blessed purposes of his holy will, to reprove or punish, to nourish or strengthen his servants. Hence the Magicians in Egypt were permitted, to a certain extent, to imitate God's faithful servant Moses. And now in the present hour may not unawakened men, who unsent of God minister in holy things, sometimes be made instrumental for good to the Lord's people? See Exodus viii. 7. Matt. vii. 22. With respect to the fall and punishment of the man of God that came out of Judah to Beth-el, the subject holds forth a lesson of great usefulness in the church, and no doubt it was one intention of the Holy Ghost, for which it was recorded. It should be re-

membered that the Lord had made suitable provision in the church, to guard his servants against false teachers by a positive law; in which the Lord expressly caused it to be stated that it was possible for even the sign which a false prophet might give to come to pass; but yet this was to be considered as no authority for departing from a positive law of God. See Deut. xiii. 1—4. I beg the Reader to remark with me the nature of the punishment; that his carcass should not come to the sepulchre of his fathers. But there is nothing in this more than a *temporal* judgment. And an apostle under the gospel state had it in commission, to tell the church of believers, that when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. 1 Cor. xi. 32. After all, how sweet is it to wait upon the Lord, and to watch his grace and providence in all events. Surely *the very wrath of man shall praise him*. God exercises an holy jealousy over his people; and the sins of his servants shall be chastised, though he shews favour to their persons for Jesus's sake. The psalmist makes a beautiful observation on this subject. *Moses, and Aaron, and Samuel, called upon the Lord and he answered them*. But though he answered them as the Lord God in covenant, and was a God that forgave them, it is said that *he took vengeance of their inventions*. Psalm xcix. 6—8. Reader! do you not eye Jesus in all this? The covenant of redemption holds for ever good; and the blood and righteousness of Jesus never lose their efficacy. Oh! to grace in Jesus what mercies are owing!

33 ¶ After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became *one* of the priests of the high places.

34 And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut *it* off, and to destroy *it* from off the face of the earth.

What an awful example doth this man afford of an unreclaimed heart! oh, Reader! learn from it the vast and infinite importance of the Spirit's work upon the soul, without whose gracious influence every sinner's heart would be more and more hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin.

REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! pause over the perusal of this chapter, and contemplate in what a variety of views thou mayest gather spiritual improvement from it under the blessed Spirit's teaching.

In the awful character of Jeroboam, learn the truth of that solemn scripture; *though favour be shewed to the wicked; yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord*.

In the character of the false prophet, grown old in sin as well as

years, what an alarming representation is held forth to what a desperately wicked state men may advance, who though ministering in holy things, never feel their power, and live and die unconscious of their influence.

In the character of the man of God acting with such faithfulness in daring the impiety of Jeroboam, and yet falling under the slender temptation of the deceiver, may we learn what a mixture of faith and unbelief makes up the characters of the Lord's followers.

Where then, blessed Jesus, under all these views, where shall we direct our thoughts for perfection and for comfort but to thee? Thou art indeed holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Here then, dearest Lord, in thee and thy compleat righteousness, may my soul direct her sole regard for acceptance and for favour. All altars, sacrifices, worship, doctrine, government, ordinances, and services, which look not to thee are alike false. But in thee all true sanctuary service finds acceptance. As a nail fastened in a sure place by the master of assemblies; on thee, thou precious Lamb of God, which takest away the sin of thy people, would I hang my life, my hope, my confidence, my all!

CHAP. XIV.

CONTENTS.

In this chapter begins the history of Israel and Judah in the division of the two kingdoms; so that attention should be paid in the reading to distinguish to which the subject belongs. The chapter opens with the relation of the affairs of Israel under king Jeroboam, and concludes his reign. The latter end of the chapter relates to the affairs of the kingdom of Judah under Rehoboam, and the close of his reign.

AT that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick.

2 And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which told me that *I should be king* over this people.

3 And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child.

Was not this sickness of Jeroboam's son, and perhaps his heir, enough to have arrested the heart of the father to seek the Lord? Is it possible to behold Jeroboam as convinced that the Lord's prophet was a sure prophet; and yet to attempt the deceiving him, as is here said. Alas! to what a desperate state is the mind of the sinner capable of being reduced, void of grace!

4 And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age.

5 ¶ And the LORD said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he is sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her: for it shall be, when she cometh in that she shall feign herself *to be* another woman.

What an interesting view is here given us of the Lord's servant, and yet infinitely more of the graciousness of the Lord himself. Reader! how blessed are those who when the bodily eyes fail, have a sight by faith, and enjoy the visions of the almighty! and oh! how doubly blessed when Jesus sweetly visits them and manifests himself to them; when (as the church beautifully expresseth it) *he standeth behind our wall, looketh forth at the windows and sheweth himself through the lattice.* Song ii. 9.

6 And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself *to be* another? for *I am* sent to thee *with heavy tidings.*

7 Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel,

8 And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and *yet* thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do *that* only *which was* right in mine eyes:

9 But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back:

10 Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, *and* him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the

remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.

11 Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the LORD hath spoken *it*.

12 Arise thou therefore, and get thee to thine own house: *and* when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die.

13 And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found *some* good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

14 Moreover the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? even now.

15 For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the LORD to anger.

16 And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin.

What a delightful portrait is here drawn of a faithful minister in the character of Ahijah! though commissioned with heavy tidings, yet he keeps nothing back. Oh! for all the ministers of Jesus to have grace to imitate such an illustrious example. How gracious is the Lord, even in the midst of judgments, represented! Reader! remark, though Israel had so shamefully revolted, and set up idols, yet the Lord still calls himself the Lord God of Israel. Let the Reader consult another beautiful evidence of the same kind; Malachi ii. 14—16. What an awful message is sent to Jeroboam! and what an awful character he was! He had exceeded in impiety all that were before him. Even Saul had never set up idols! and what a dreadful end is pronounced concerning him! Let us, Reader, stop, however, in the midst of this alarming account of the wicked, to remark what is said concerning his son. Some good thing was found in him. And what could this be but grace? And was not this grace distinguishing grace, when found in the child of so graceless a fa-

ther? See Reader! how the Lord in all ages of his church hath been carrying on his blessed desigus in refrence to him in whom all the families of the earth are blessed! The prediction of Jeroboam's ruin in the advance of another king whom the Lord would raise up over Israel, was to take place so speedily, that it might be said to be even now; so near was it at hand. And to shew how true the Lord is concerning both his threatenings and promises, it may not be amiss here to remark that this prophecy of a king to be raised to Israel against Jeroboam and his house took place in the person of *Baasha* soon after the elevation of Nadab to the throne. And indeed the whole race of Jeroboam was extinct in little more than 20 years. So short, so very short, are the triumphs of the ungodly!

17 And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah: *and* when she came to the threshold of the door, the child died;

18 And they buried him; and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet.

The distress must have been aggravated in that she saw not the child alive. I cannot pass over the mention here made of *Tirzah*, short as it is, without remarking that as this was the city, on account of its loveliness, which one of the ancient kings of Canaan made choice of for his residence, (see Jos. xii. 24), and now inhabited by Jeroboam, and until the time of *Zimri* by his successors; so Jesus, in commending the loveliness of his spouse, compares her beauty to that of *Tirzah*; being made so by his righteousness, and by the graces of his Spirit. See Song vi. 4.

19 And the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

20 And the days which Jeroboam reigned *were* two and twenty years: and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead.

The wars of Jeroboam, how splendid soever they might seem, are not so much worth remarking as the relation of his death. If the Reader will consult the corresponding history, of this impious prince, as recorded in the Chronicles, he will there discover that his death was induced by an immediate visitation from heaven; for it is said that the Lord struck him. 2 Chron. xiii. 20.

21 And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam *was* forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did

choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name *was* Naamah an Amonitess.

The sacred historian here turns to the subject of Judah in the government of Rehoboam. The account of this son of Solomon is short and nothing interesting. No act of obedience towards God. No act of kindness toward men. He is said merely to have lived, and to have reigned so long, and sprung from the race of the Ammonites. See Reader! what sad effects spring out of ungracious alliances!

22 And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done.

23 For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.

24 And there were also sodomites in the land: *and* they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

What a melancholy account is here given of Judah! she is become more degenerate than in any period before. And this at a time when the temple was in all its splendor! Reader! do not fail to remark with me how little the sweet simplicity and godly sincerity of true spiritual worshippers, hath to do with pompous buildings, and the formalities of devotion. Precious Jesus! make me an inner court worshipper!

25 And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, *that* Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem:

26 And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house: he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

27 And king Rehoboam made in their stead brasen shields, and committed *them* unto the hands of the chief of the guard, which kept the door of the king's house.

28 And it was *so*, when the king went into the house of the LORD, that the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard chamber.

29 Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, *are* thay not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

30 And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all *their* days.

31 And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And his mother's name *was* Naamah an Ammonitess. And Abijam his son reigned in his stead.

Calamities both public and private, are near at hand, when men desert the Lord! dreadful is the state of that man, or that nation, which hath God for their enemy. So everlastingly true is that aphorism of Solomon: *Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.* Prov. xiv. 34.

REFLECTIONS.

WHILE we have reason to shudder in beholding the sad consequences of our fallen nature, in an example so truly dreadful as that of Jeroboam; and while I would for myself and Reader pray for grace to lay low in the dust of self-abasement in a conscious sense, that if we differ from him it is grace alone that hath done it; I would pause over the beautiful account that is given of the man of God, and pray that the Lord in mercy to the present hour would grant his church many, many *Ahijahs*. Blessed Jesus! I would say, send forth faithful ministers who will neither fear the frowns, nor court the smiles, of any man; but speak the whole truth as it is in Jesus, and keep back nothing that may be profitable to the alarming of sinners, the comforting of saints, and to the building up thy people in their most holy faith.

But while I would thus look up and beg a blessing for a faithful ministry, shall I contemplate the servant and forget the master? Shall not the view of Ahijah lead my soul to thee, thou great Prophet and Priest of thy people? Yes! blessed Jesus! if I forget thee let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. Thou art indeed a faithful high priest! and thy faithfulness and truth in making manifest thine and thy father's laws, which our whole race have broken, have been the blessed means, through the influence of thy Holy Spirit upon our hearts, of turning thy people from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to thee the living God. Yes! dearest Jesus! thou art a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man! and thou hast not only proclaimed to us our faults, and by the influence of thy blessed Spirit convinced us of sin, but thou hast in infinite mercy constrained us to thy love, and turned our hearts back again. Lord Jesus! break down all our idols! take away all our false refuges of lies! do thou sit, blessed Jesus, as a refiner and purifier of silver; and purify the sons

of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. For then the promise is sweet, and will surely be fulfilled; *then shall the offering of Judah be pleasant to the Lord as in the days of old, and as in former years.* Hasten, blessed Jesus! the accomplishment of this glorious end; purge away all my dross, and take away all my sin.

CHAP. XV.

CONTENTS.

The history of the two kingdoms is again carried on through this chapter. The former part of it relates the history of two kings of Judah; Abijam and Asa. And the latter part of the chapter records the history of two kings of Israel; Nadab and Baasha.

NOW in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat reigned Abijam over Judah.

2 Three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom.

3 And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father.

I stop the Reader in the very opening of Abijam's history, to call his attention to one or two things concerning this man, which merit notice. In the account given of him here he is called *Abijam*; and he is said to have walked in all the sins of his father. By which I am led to think, that this refers principally to the latter end of his reign. For if the Reader will consult the parallel history concerning him in the Chronicles, he will there discover him as dignified with a more honourable name. He is there called *Abijah*; meaning, *My Father is Jehovah*; probably in allusion to the victory the Lord gave him over Jeroboam; upon which occasion he ascribed the glory to the Lord. I desire the Reader to consult that part of scripture, and read through his address before the battle. See 2 Chron. xiii. 1 to the end.

4 Nevertheless for David's sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem;

5 Because David did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

How sweet is it to observe how the Holy Ghost doth now and then

design to lead the church in the midst of an apparent history of kings and contests, to a glimpse of Jesus, on whose account, and for whom the lamp in David's family is kept burning. Oh! Holy Spirit! grant me grace to love thee, and to adore thine exceeding riches of grace, in thus glorifying Jesus in the darkest ages, and the most distant periods, before the coming of the Lord!

6 And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life.

7 Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? and there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam.

8 And Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead.

What is the whole history of man, and every man, from the fallen stock of a fallen race, when the sum total of his life is added together, more than what is here said! Oh! how precious, in the midst of such dying views, to look to Jesus, and contemplate him who is always the same, and whose years shall have no end. Psm. cii. 27.

9 ¶ And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah.

10 And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom.

11 And Asa did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD, as *did* David his father.

12 And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.

13 And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from *being* queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt *it* by the brook Kidron.

14 But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days.

15 And he brought in the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which himself had

dedicated, into the house of the LORD, silver, and gold, and vessels.

16 And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

17 And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

18 Then Asa took all the silver and the gold *that were* left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants: and king Asa sent them to Ben-hadad, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,

19 *There is* a league between me and thee, *and* between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold; come and break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

20 So Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of the hosts which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali.

21 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard *thereof*, that he left off building of Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah.

22 Then king Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none *was* exempted: and they took away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had builded; and king Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah.

23 The rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet.

24 ¶ And Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.

In order to have a clear account of the good reign of Asa, we must compare what is here related of him with what is said, 2 Chron. xiv. and 2 following chapters. His reign was long and prosperous. And it is expressly said of him, that *his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days*. What is said of him therefore in the book of the Chronicles, in his old age, in the reproof Hanani the seer gave him, must be considered as referring to the infirmities of declining years. The sad tokens of a fallen nature, which amidst the many evidences of a renewed state, furnish no less testimonies that we are renewed but in part. We carry about still a body of sin and death, as Paul complained, which drags down the soul.—Here again, precious Jesus, how increasingly precious is thy perfect righteousness to the believer's view.

25 And Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned over Israel two years.

26 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

27 And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon, which *belonged* to the Philistines; for Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon.

28 Even in the third year of Asa king of Judah did Baasha slay him, and reigned in his stead.

29 And it came to pass, when he reigned, *that* he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite:

30 Because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger.

31 Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

32 And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

33 ¶ In the third year of Asa king of Judah began Baasha the son of Ahijah to reign over all Israel in Tirzah, twenty and four years.

34 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

What a short reign was this of Jeroboam's son! what a doleful end to all Jeroboam's greatness! and how sure are the declarations of the Lord to overtake the guilty! the whole race of this impious prince is destroyed. And that prediction the prophet Ahijah gave literally fulfilled. See 1 Kings xiv. 10.

REFLECTIONS.

WHILE I read of the miseries of war, and behold in the succession of kings, like what is here represented in this chapter, one rising up to the destruction of another; how sweet and gracious a relief is it to my mind, to contemplate him of whom the prophet, ages before he came, thus delightfully predicted the features of his character; *Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind; and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*

All this, and infinitely more, blessed Jesus, art thou to thy people! Thou art a king indeed under whose government thy happy subjects live in peace and everlasting security. And thou art a covert and hiding place; a sanctuary and refuge; a fountain indeed of waters, even living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

In thee, and under thy gracious reign, whatever enemies arise, thou fightest all our battles, and makest thy people more than conquerors through thy grace enabling them. And oh! when I consider how secretly and securely in the union with thy person, and by virtue of thy finished redemption, thy subjects are eternally safe from all the possibilities of danger; how doth my soul rejoice, and my heart is made glad. Yes! blessed Jesus! I can and do speak to my soul in the sweet words of thy prophet, and enter into an heart-felt participation with the church of old of all its blissful properties; *Sing O daughter of Zion; shout O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments; he hath cast out thine enemy. The king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more.*

CHAP. XVI.

CONTENTS.

This chapter relates nothing of the history of Judah but wholly concerns the kingdom of Israel. Jehu comes with an alarming message

from the Lord to Baasha. His ruin and death; the reign of his son Elah; the conspiracy of Zimri; the division of Israel after the death of Zimri between Tibni and Omri; the beginning also of the reign of Ahab; and more especially the rebuilding of Jericho which fulfilled the curse of Joshua.

THEN the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying,

2 Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel; and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins;

3 Behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house; and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

4 Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat.

It is remarkable that while Hanani the father was sent on a commission to the king of Judah, (See 2 Chron. xvi. 7.) Jehu his son is here sent on a like errand of reproof to the king of Israel. But Reader! it becomes a more interesting remark of the gracious dealings of God with sinners when sending his faithful servants to such characters at all. Are not all the Lord's expostulations to this amount? "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, said the Lord God!" Ezek. xviii. 32. And I beg the Reader to take notice of this further mark which those verses record of God's love, notwithstanding all the sin, and idolatry, and rebellion, of Israel, the Lord still calls them his people. *I made thee prince over my people Israel.* Oh the wonderful condescension and unparalleled grace of God!

5 Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

6 So Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah: and Elah his son reigned in his stead.

7 And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came the word of the LORD against Baasha, and against his house, even for all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, in provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, in be-

ing like the house of Jeroboam ; and because he killed him.

Such is the sure end of impiety. Strange that as Baasha had seen in the instance of Jeroboam and his house, the dreadful effects of idolatry, that his heart should have been so lifted up as to forget the Lord's mercy towards him. But alas! what is man, what is every man, unless renewed by grace, but the servant of sin, and the slave of Satan!

8 ¶ In the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah, two years.

9 And his servant Zimri, captain of half *his* chariots, conspired against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza steward of *his* house in Tirzah.

10 And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead.

This is the famous, or rather infamous Zimri, concerning whom it almost became a proverb in Israel. *Had Zimri peace who slew his master?* 2 Kings ix. 31. What a solemn lesson is here read to drunkards in the sudden death of Elah! Reader! what an awful thought is it to meditate on the multitudes that are going out of life daily from the effect of this one detestable vice; some by sudden, and some by lingering consequences! and what can charity itself plead in apology for such conduct, which sinks men into the brute, and in itself, if the word of God had not so decidedly spoken upon the subject, proves a total disqualification for all the pure joys of heaven. Oh! that Paul's words were put up in golden letters in all the haunts of drunkenness in the kingdom. *Know ye not that drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

11 And it came to pass when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, *that* he slew all the house of Baasha: he left him not one that pisseth against a wall, neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends.

12 Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet,

13 For all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.

14 Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

What a quick transition of government from father to son, and from the master to the servant, do these few chapters, and even these few verses, bring before us. And is it for such short lived honours, and interrupted, as they are, with continued disquietude, men in all ages lose their immortal souls! oh! ble-sed Jesus! how striking are thy sacred words; *What is a man profited to gain the whole world, if it were possible, and in the end thus lose his soul?* Mark vii. 36, 37.

15 ¶ In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. And the people *were* encamped against Gibbethon, which *belonged* to the Philistines.

16 And the people *that were* encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king: wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp.

17 And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah.

18 And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire and died,

19 For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin.

20 Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

21 Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; and half followed Omri.

22 But the people that followed Omri prevailed

against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned.

Is it not somewhat extraordinary, amidst all these revolutions and contentions for the empire, that no one Israelite had firmness of mind enough to propose to return to the house of David! Reader! Is it not still more extraordinary that amidst all the tyranny of sin and Satan, no one sinner hath grace enough to say "I will return to the Lord?" Alas! until the Lord hedges up our way with thorns that we shall not find our lovers; and until the Lord leads us into the wilderness, in order that after straits and difficulties he may speak comfortably to us, no son of Adam will ever think of returning to the Lord. Grace must first enter into the heart before that any cry of returning to the Lord will arise in the soul; and when in great mercy the Lord doth this, the next thing we hear the sinner say is, *I will arise and go unto my Father!* We have a beautiful illustration of this precious truth in the case of the church, as described by the prophet; See Hosea ii. throughout.

23 In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah.

24 And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria.

25 But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that *were* before him.

26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.

27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he shewed, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

28 So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria: and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

As a king of Judah, the good king, had a long and prosperous reign, while all these troubles were going on in Israel. And Omri though successful over Tibni, had but a short triumph, and full of evil. Nay, the Holy Ghost records of him that *he did worse than all that were before him*. Is it possible that his iniquity could exceed Jeroboam's?

Alas! alas! if the Reader be desirous to know the price for which Samaria was bought, it may not be amiss to observe that a talent of silver was in value of our money somewhat about £350. This hill, as it is here called, is the memorable city of Samaria, where our Lord Jesus directed his steps for the conversion of a poor adulteress there. John iv. 5.

29 ¶ And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years.

30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that *were* before him.

31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

Still going on in the progression of wickedness the son of Omri exceeds his father. Open idolatry, barefaced and impudent, and open alliances with idolatrous princes, formed the leading features in the character of Ahab. Sad proofs of which are recorded in the succeeding chapters.

34 ¶ In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

It was about 590 years before this period when, at the destruction of Jericho, Joshua pronounced a curse on the man that should rise up to build it again. But in the impious reign of Ahab, one of his subjects, more daring in impiety than the rest, calling to mind perhaps this prophecy, as if to make a jest both of God and his servant, undertook it; and the event exactly corresponded to the prediction. See Joshua vi. 26. *Who hath hardened himself against God, and hath prospered?* Job ix. 4.

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, my soul, over the reading of this chapter, and carefully mark the dreadful end of all the workers of iniquity! and what doth the history of all ungodly men furnish, whatever rank or situation they move in, but sad examples of the same. Under what striking images and similitudes doth the word of God represent them. They are said to be captives and slaves, the servants of sin, and that cannot cease from sin. And how do their lives give evidence, to the reality of such figures! For what is the wretched effect of carnal pursuit in the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, but the hire, the wages, the sure reward, in the sorrow that must follow? And are not all characters of this description, however diversified in their different occupations and pursuits, treasuring up unto themselves sure misery, here in this life not unfrequently recompensed to them, and endless sorrow in that which is to come; and are not these like the covenanted wages of the hireling and the servant, which he expects and hath a right to, in the termination of his labour?

Blessed Jesus! how refreshing is the thought to thy people, that thou hast brought them out of the service of Satan, and made them free in thy service. Thou graciously didst search for them in their haunts of sin, when, like others, they were children of wrath, and were wandering far from thee, on the same mountains of iniquity, and vanity, and worldly enjoyments. And now, having brought them, by the illumination and conviction of thine Holy Spirit, into the bond of the covenant, thou preservest them from falling into those depths of sin which swallow up the ungodly. Dearest Jesus! be thou my Guide, my Counsellor, my Keeper, and my supreme joy; then sin shall not have dominion over me, nor the vanities of the world draw me into perdition. *Having put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, I shall put on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

CHAP. XVII.

CONTENTS.

We have in this chapter, for the first time, introduced to us, that eminent prophet and servant of God, Elijah. He comes to Israel, prophesying of a long season of drought. He is hidden of God, and fed by ravens. Afterwards he sojourneth with a widow, at Zarephath: works a miracle to supply her and household with food: and raiseth the widow's son, when dead.

AND Elijah the Tishbite, *who was* of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, *As the* LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

This eminent prophet of Jehovah, whose history forms so considerable a figure in the Bible, demands our attention the more closely. His name is most striking—Elijah; which is a compound word, doubly significant, and means, Eli, my God; Jah, Jehovah; most probably, so called because implying in whose name, and by whose authority he came. It is remarkable that he differs from all other prophets, in that no account is given of his genealogy. The Jews, in high veneration of Elijah, had a tradition that he came from heaven. But we have an authority to know better. The Holy Ghost, by his servant James, the apostle, tells the church that *he was a man subject to like passions as we are.* James v. 17. But what I would beg the Reader particularly to observe concerning Elijah, is his faithfulness, and boldness in the cause of God. Shutting up the heavens was considered as one of God's sore judgments. Therefore for Elijah to go boldly to the court of Israel and tell the impious monarch to his face, that this judgment should take place, was faithfulness indeed! The apostle James, under the blessed Spirit, carries the commendation of Elijah even a step higher than mere faithfulness. For he expressly saith, that his prayer of faith both shut and opened heaven. With an holy indignation against Israel's sin, he prayed that it might not rain. And when he found the Lord softening the hearts of the Israelities by repentance, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain. See Reader! the preciousness of faith in Jesus. James v. 17, 18.

2 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

3 Get thee hence, and turn thee east-ward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan.

4 And it shall be, *that* thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

It should seem that this hiding of the prophet, was not so much by way of security to his person, as it was that the Lord might accomplish his purpose concerning Israel. A time was determined of famine, by way of punishment. And Elijah shall not be at hand to make intercession, to reverse the sentence. Reader! think of thy privileges: Jesus ever liveth, ever loveth; is ever at hand to make intercession for poor sinners; and by him the distressed soul may have access at all times, by one Spirit, unto the Father. What deeper designs were in this event, or what it might be intended to prefigure, I do not venture to say. But it is worthy of remark, that when the church, which is represented in the book of Revelations under the similitude of the woman, is said to have been driven into the wilderness, a place is said to be prepared of God for her, where they should feed her a thousand two hundred and threescore days. And in the same chapter, it is said, that she should be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. Which, if explained according to the usual terms of prophecy, would correspond (in this latter part, at least,) to the three years and half of Elijah's concealment. See Rev. xii. 6, 14.

5 So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD : for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

Besides the providence of God in this, as far as related to the supplying of the necessities of the body, there was much of a gracious, spiritual ordinance in it, if I mistake not. How doth the Lord Jesus hand his bread and flesh to his people in secret! How doth he give them to eat of the hidden manna! Whatever messengers he makes use of, as the ravens were here, ministering to his servant; yet, blessed be his name, it is he himself which gives to them of his flesh and blood, by which they live *in* him, and *to* him. John vi. 51. Rev. ii. 17. I must detain the Reader for one observation more, on this interesting passage. In all this gracious process for the maintenance and preservation of his servant, it is beautiful to remark how the Lord acted by the very contrary means to the common course of things; nay, even contrary to the common course of nature. Of all creatures in the creation, none so unpromising as ravens, to bring flesh to the prophet. For it is well known that ravens are carnivorous creatures; that is, I mean, they live on flesh and carrion. And, as they are very voracious; what but an overruling power, could have inclined those creatures to carry food, which they themselves would rather gorge upon for ever, than desist from eating. Moreover: Ravens are said to neglect their own young. And hence the Lord himself demanded of Job; *Who provideth for the raven his food, when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat!* Job xxxviii. 41. The Psalmist also expresseth the same, when he saith, *He giveth to the young ravens when they cry.* Psm. cxlvii. 9. Hence, therefore, to make creatures void of the natural instinct of affection to their own young, to carry flesh to the prophet; how supernatural was this act? And is there any one, after this, disposed to cavil with the divine authority, and impiously enquire where those ravens could get their supplies for the prophet? Is not the earth the Lord's, and the fulness thereof! But, Reader! think what a strengthening this must have been to the faith of Elijah! Lord Jesus! art not thou daily supplying thy people with the sweet morsels of thy grace! And shall not our faith in thee, be equally strengthened as the prophet's! That a life of grace is kept and preserved in the souls of thy people, what, but thy seasonable supplies could accomplish it, amidst all our famine and need? And being thus kept and preserved, shall we any longer doubt? Oh! for faith, like the prophet, to live upon Jesus!

7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

Perhaps this drying of the brook was for the exercise of Elijah. And when our friends, like Job's, deal deceitfully by us, as a brook, (Job vi. 15) or when all creatures comfort fail; how sweet is it to live upon the

full and never-ceasing fountain? Jesus is all this to his people! God the Father is a fountain, and the Holy Ghost also: See Zech. xiii. 1. Jer. ii. 13. John vii. 37—39.

8 ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which *belongeth* to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

Observe, though all means of sustenance were over, at the brook Cherith; yet Elijah doth not move his quarters, until directed of God. It is sweet in all our movements, to wait the pillar of Cloud directing the way. There is a great beauty, as well as mercy, in this movement of the prophet to Zidon. This was among the Gentiles. Jezebel, Ahab's wife, the great advocate for idolatry, came from Zidon. Hath the Lord mercy for the inhabitants of this place! Yes! There is one of Jesus' seed there. His eye hath been upon her from everlasting. Thither Elijah must therefore go. It is worthy the Reader's remark, that it was the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, the Son of God particularly visited, and from whence he gathered that pearl of his Redemption crown so gloriously shining in the gospel. See Matt. xv. 21—28. And it should seem, from what is said in this passage concerning Elijah, that the Lord had commanded this widow woman to sustain his servant, that she knew the Lord! Oh! precious distinguishing grace!

10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman *was* there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

11 And as she was going to fetch *it*, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

12 And she said, *As* the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I *am* gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go *and* do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring *it* unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The

barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days.

What a most beautiful and interesting history this is, independant of the sacred and spiritual sense of it. See how the Lord in his providence overruled the events, that this widow should be coming to the gate of the city as Elijah entered it. See how graciously the Lord directed the mind of the prophet to speak to her. See how the same gracious God influenced the widow's mind, not only to attend to the call of the prophet, but, in the midst of such a pressing famine, to be ready to give to a stranger. And see what strong faith she had in the words of a stranger, as upon first sight to believe what Elijah said, that the Lord by a miracle would keep her stock undiminished. And only conceive what sweet living that must have been, kept up as it was daily by faith, both for Elijah, and the widow, and her whole house for many days, and which *many days*, as appears by the calculation of the time Elijah was there, could not have been less than two whole years. But when the Reader hath paid all due attention to those many interesting things in the account as an history, I beg of him to look at one feature of it in a spiritual sense, and then say, whether it is not in this point of view beautifully enhanced. *Make me a little cake first* (said the prophet) *and after, for thyself and son.* And doth not Jesus say the same to his people in the exercise of their faith and dependance upon him? Our stock is low, and all supplies are seemingly over. Nevertheless, faith, real, lively, active faith, like this widow, hears Jesus command, Let me be first supplied, and hastens to do it. For when brought down to the lowest state, and the soul casts herself, and all she hath upon Jesus; acting faith upon the naked promises of God in Christ: this is precious, precious faith. And every poor believer that is enabled to do this will find, like the widow's cruse, that seeking first Jesus and his righteousness, all other things necessary will be added thereto. Thus saith Jesus himself, and thus as the prophet here, the authority is backed in the name of the Lord God of Israel.

16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

17 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, *that* the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.

Of this sickness, as it is proved by the issue, it may be said, as our Lord did of the sickness of Lazarus, it is not unto death but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. John

xi. 4. Let the Reader observe how, in the midst of all the smiles and favors of the Lord's providence, this apparently frowning dispensation is sent into the household of this woman. How sweet is that scripture, when received and truly believed in, by God's people. Heb. xii. 6.

18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

Reader, do not fail to remark, (and which is, indeed, the sweetest improvement of the passage) what a close connection there is in the mind, between the guilt of sin and the afflictions of life which are the consequences of sin. You see how the death of her child revived a sense and conviction of sin in her conscience. And this is the sting of all afflictions. For only suppose the sting of sin removed, though the affliction be not removed, the burden and pressure is gone, and the mind is at ease. Hence the prophet, speaking of gospel-times, and of the blessed effects of the sting of sin taken out by the blood and righteousness of Christ, makes this sweet observation: *The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein, shall be forgiven their iniquity.* Isaiah xxxiii. 24. Not that the prophet meant by this, to say that mankind had discovered a climate where no sickness was known; for wherever sinners, even redeemed sinners, live, there must be sickness and death, the sure consequence of sin. See Rom. v. 12. But the inhabitant of the Gospel Church of Jesus shall no longer complain of sickness; because he is forgiven all his iniquities in Jesus. The burden and sorrow of sickness is gone, because the guilt of sin is taken away. Hence David, under the assurance of pardoning mercy in Christ, calls upon all that is within him to bless the Lord, who hath forgiven all his iniquities, and healed all his diseases. Psm. ciii. 1—3.

19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?

21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.

22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.

23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother : and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

What an interesting representation is here made of the prophet. He stops not to reason with the disconsolate mother : makes no reply to her angry expostulation : presumes to promise nothing ; gives no encouragement ; but takes the child and hastens with it to the Lord. Reader ! oh ! that you and I could learn from hence, where we are to have recourse in all our trials, difficulties, and discouragements. No doubt the mind of Elijah was distressed greatly at the event. It is probable, from long living with the widow and her child, he had conceived no small affection for him. But we hear nothing of this. He hastens to a throne of grace, there to pour out his soul before the Lord. But what were his views ? Never to this period, was there any instance upon record, of a dead body raised to life again. And could Elijah hope that such a miracle would be granted ? Yes ! it is certain, from his prayer, that he looked for this mercy. For after having pleaded with the Lord, he makes this the one great desire of his petition ; that *the child's soul might come into him again*. And the event answered his expectation. Oh ! what cannot strong faith perform ! One of the ancient fathers, in his observation on this passage, saith, that certainly such a return of the soul to the body, not only taught the early church the reality of the soul's existence when separated from the body ; but also conveyed the further intimation, in the outlines of it, of that glorious doctrine of life and immortality, hereafter to be brought fully to light by the gospel. 2 Tim. i. 10.

24 And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou *art* a man of God, *and* that the word of the LORD in thy mouth *is* truth.

Poor woman ! notwithstanding the long series of miracles, which she and her household were supported by, ought to have convinced her that Elijah was a man of God ; yet, it should seem, the death of her child staggered her faith. Alas ! what poor creatures the best of us are. It is only for Jesus to throw down one of our props, and like Jonah, we think we do well to be angry. Dearest Lord ! *increase our faith !*

REFLECTIONS.

IN contemplating the character of Elijah, as represented to our view in this chapter, what an illustrious example doth he stand forward, of the noblest faith ! With what confidence do we see him going in before the idolatrous king of Israel, to tell him, that for his impiety, God had shut up the heavens, and their influences ! With what confidence in his God doth he proceed to hide himself by the brook, where there could be no sustenance, but what should be sent to him miraculously ! With what cheerful resignation doth he remove to Zarephath, when the brook became dry ; still depend-

ing for his daily supply from the same resource of faith! And while he knew, that Jezebel was feasting the false prophets with luxuries, at her table daily, how delightfully doth Elijah feast himself on the product of the barrel of meal, and the cruse of oil, under the favor and smiles of the Lord? And yet, if possible, still more, when by the alarming visitation of his hostess' son's death, the Lord seemed, for the moment, by this breach, to have made a breach in her affection to him, and all his peace and comfort; how truly glorious doth the man of God then appear, in the exercise of a faith almost unparalleled. And,

Reader! what shall be our improvement in this view of the prophet? What indeed, should it be, what ought it to be, but to look more stedfastly than ever we have yet done, unto all-precious Jesus, who is the Author and Giver of faith! Was it not the Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets, which did signify to them the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow? The Holy Ghost, by his servant the apostle Peter, hath graciously taught the church that this was the case! And may we not, from the same blessed authority, conclude that it must have been the same Spirit of Christ in the prophets, which led them on to such glorious deeds, as are recorded of them in his holy word? And shall we not then, under this precious assurance, look up to Jesus, all-gracious Jesus now, and beseech him to give us the like precious faith, through the righteousness of God our Saviour? Yes! thou Almighty Author and Finisher of our faith, to thee would I direct mine eyes, beseeching thee to grant me such measures of this blessed principle, in the view of thy servant the prophet here set forth, that when called upon in public, I may be bold for thy truth, and when retiring into private, I may live by faith upon thee, thou Son of God, when all creature comforts, like the brook, shall dry up. And, Lord Jesus! grant that I may be the follower of them, who now, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. And being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, may we lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset thy people, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus!

CHAP. XVIII.

CONTENTS.

This chapter relates to us the further history of Elijah. The time being arrived for his appearance again before Ahab, the Lord commands him to go on this embassy. An account of this interview. Elijah demands a decision between the prophets of Baal and himself before all Israel, who is the God. The day of determination. The Lord's answering by fire. Israel convinced. Baal's prophets destroyed. And the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

AND it came to pass *after* many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.

This is a most beautiful chapter, in which the faith of Elijah is put to the strictest test. The Lord promised to visit Israel with the needed rain. After many days it is said: But from the apostle James's account we find that the draught had been for three years and six months. James v. 17.

2 And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And *there was* a sore famine in Samaria.

3 And Ahab called Obadiah, which *was* the governor of *his* house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly :

4 For it was *so*, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)

5 And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

6 So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

7 And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, *Art* thou that my lord Elijah?

8 And he answered him, I *am*: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here*.

9 And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?

10 *As* the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, *He is not there*; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here*.

12 And it shall come to pass, *as soon as* I am

gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.

13 Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

14 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here*: and he shall slay me.

15 And Elijah said, *As* the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day.

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

Reader! figure to yourself the poor, despised, solitary prophet, thus going to shew himself to such a prince as Ahab, backed with a wife of such diabolical principles as Jezebel! Recollect what is here said, that during the long famine Jezebel had been destroying all the Lord's prophets; those that escaped had been hid in caves, and dared not to appear! Consider further that so dreadfully the famine raged, that the king himself went in search of any brook or fountain which could be found. And lastly, in order to view properly the intrepidity of Elijah, let the Reader recollect what Obadiah told Elijah when he met him, that diligent search had been made for him in every nation or kingdom where he could possibly send to enquire; plainly testifying thereby what Ahab would have done to Elijah had he got him into his hands. Let all these circumstances be considered; and then let the Reader pause with me, and admire the greatness of that blessed principle of faith with which the Great Author of it endued his servant. Before we prosecute the chapter, I would detain the Reader to remark with me also, the graciousness of God in preserving to himself a seed in the earth in the worst of times: and moreover, when iniquity, as in this reign of Ahab, had ripened to such a degree, that his grace was still reserved for them to turn the hearts of his people back again!—I would beg the Reader also to behold in the character of Obadiah, how evidently the covenant promises of God must have wrought upon his mind, who in the very court of Ahab, and while governor of his house, yet followed the Lord. See the promise, Jeremiah xxxii. 40. And lastly, before we proceed to the other part of the chapter, I request the Reader to consider how the heart of Elijah, in his zeal for the Lord's honour, and his love to the souls of the Lord's people, must have been burning with impatience during the long period of three years and half, and secretly praying that the awful judgment of famine, and the dreadful consequences thereof, might be sooner averted.

17 ¶ And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art* thou he that troubleth Israel?

18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

Observe the hardness and impenitency of the king! Observe the firmness and intrepidity of the prophet!

19 Now therefore send, *and* gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

20 So Ahab sent unto the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

How must the mind of this wretched man Ahab have been overruled so immediately to comply with the prophet's request. It is more than probable that Ahab thought, as Elijah had declared when he predicted the famine, that there should be no dew, nor rain, but according to his word, that Elijah would give that word on mount Carmel. No doubt, the Lord's hand was in the whole, and he overruled Ahab's mind to obey the prophet implicitly.

21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

This argument was very powerful for decision of character: but the question to an infidel would be still undetermined; Who is the Lord? This was settled by the ensuing miracle.

22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, *even* I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men.

23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*;

24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the god that answereth by fire, let him be god. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

Here the man of God brings the question home nearer, and puts it at once to a decision, so that every man confessed the mode of trial was fair. But Reader! think in what a frame of mind the servant of the Lord must have been to trust the whole event upon this issue. Surely Elijah manifested himself to have been a true son of him who against hope believed in hope, and shewed to what a degree of stability his faith had brought him. Reader! can you and I look up with equal steadiness to Jesus, and say, Let that Jesus who answereth for my sins, let him be my God?

25 And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress *it* first; for ye *are* many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire *under*.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, *or* peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that *their was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Had Baal answered there would have been no opportunity for Elijah's trial. But this the Lord overruled, so that among 450 of their artful priests there should be no deception. And had Elijah first appealed to the Lord before the trial of Baal's priests, many of the deluded followers of Baal would not have been convinced, perhaps, but that Baal could have done the same. But by this plan of letting Baal's priests make

their experiment first, the man of God took effectual means to make his triumph compleat. The mockery of Baal's priests exactly corresponded to the ridiculous nature of their idol worship.

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down.

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do *it* the second time. And they did *it* the second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

There is somewhat very solemn in this conduct of the prophet, when we consider what the expected event was to be.—The building, or repairing, the altar, intimated that the people had suffered it to go into ruins; and that it was not a new religion, but the religion of their fathers he aimed to bring them back to. The taking twelve stones was to shew thereby, that though two of the tribes were away, yet the whole of Israel belonged to the God of Israel; these were very striking things in the plan Elijah observed. And the covering the whole of the sacrifice with water, which was to be consumed by fire, intimated with what ease the God of Israel could, and would accomplish, the purposes of his holy will: surely it must have had a wonderful effect upon the minds of the people. It is probable that as mount Carmel was so near to the sea, and the long draught had made a scarcity of water, that the prophet had this water which was thrown over the sacrifice taken from the sea.

36 And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham,

Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I have* done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

There is a great beauty in this part of the relation; that it was at the time of offering the evening sacrifice; that solemn season appointed in the church, and observed by the faithful in all ages, and which, as it had an eye to the one all-sufficient and all-finished sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross, so it corresponded to the same hour. See Daniel ix. 21. Matt. xxvii. 46, &c. Observe the prayer of Elijah! It is addressed to Jehovah in his covenant relations. And observe the object of it: The glory of the Lord; and the welfare of his people.

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench.

Observe the graciousness of God, and how faithfully he proved himself to be a prayer-hearing, and a prayer-answering God, agreeably to that sweet promise, Isaiah lxxv. 24.

39 And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God.

No doubt such a demonstration carried *conviction* to every heart; though it is to be feared that it did not carry *conversion* to many an heart that was present. Had Ahab felt as he ought, he must have dreaded lest the fire which consumed the sacrifice should have consumed him also. But alas! it is one thing to say, The Lord he is the God, and even to repeat it; and another to say, This God is our God, for ever and ever, he shall be our guide even unto death. Reader! can you say this. Psm. xlviii. 14.

40 And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

This sentence of Elijah's was in conformity to the law; and Ahab could not dare to deny it. See Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 5. But it is evident by what follows in the next chapter, that had the sentence not have been executed in the moment, while all Israel were under the impression of this solemn scene, in all probability Baal's prophets would have escaped.

41 ¶ And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for *there is* a sound of abundance of rain.

Observe, Reader! the continuance of the divine graciousness.—The heavens shall give fire to prove God's sovereignty: and the heavens shall give rain to manifest his grace.

42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

How lovely a view doth this give us of the prophet. As soon as he had dispatched the public duties of the day, he hastens to private communion with God. Such, blessed Jesus, was thy unequalled example! Matt. xiv. 23.

43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, *There is nothing*. And he said, Go again seven times.

44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare *thy chariot*, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

45 And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

46 And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

While the prophet was wrestling in prayer with God, his servant is sent on the look out for the first sign of answers to his prayer. Six ineffectual searches were made; teaching, that though God waiteth to be gracious, yet for these things he will be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them. At length at the seventh look out a little cloud is seen, *the day of small things*. That is enough to the mind of the prophet. He knew that in the womb of that little cloud all the blessings he was praying for were contained, and would be brought forth. Oh! Reader! let you and I be continually on the look out, for the Lord Jesus is everlastingly looking upon his people; let us catch at the smallest things of Jesus, for his promise, like himself, is yea and amen.

REFLECTIONS.

I WOULD pass over, methinks, many other considerations which this sweet chapter holds forth to view, to behold in the prophetic character of

Elijah what a wonderful degree of faith the Lord God had given to him for the arduous service to which he was called. What firmness and magnanimity were manifested in his whole conduct! When the Lord commanded him to shew himself to Ahab, not a word of request to be spared the unpleasant embassy, but an instant readiness to obey. And when in the first interview with Ahab the monarch accused him with being the troubler of Israel; with what zeal did he refute the charge, and return it home upon the king. Reader! shall not you and I, in the contemplation, look up and bless the great author and giver of such faith, and pray for a portion of the same blessed Spirit? But let us pass over these lesser instances of this most wonderful gift of God in the former part of Elijah's conduct, to behold him in the exercise of it, when singly and alone he stood at mount Carmel, opposed by 450 persons. Oh! what confidence must he have had in God as the God of Israel, that the Lord would answer by fire, consume the sacrifice, and dry up the water, when in the fulness of the Spirit's influence upon his heart he commanded to drench the whole in such a way as should call for one miracle upon another, to prove the Lord faithful. Who that reads this history of Elijah but must rejoice in beholding the great blessedness of faith which is capable of producing such things. And who but must be led to bless the great author of the principle itself, who both implanted that grace in the heart, and so graciously crowned it with divine approbation!

But Reader! while looking at the servant, let us look higher also, and contemplate the master. Yes! blessed Jesus! it is thou which art the sole author and giver of it. And therefore to thee would we ascribe all the glory. Had it not been for thy gracious undertaking, such is the human mind by nature, universally speaking, that not one spark of faith could ever have been kindled in the breast of any. Here every man is the same, without any predisposition, or inclination to believe. Nay, with every prejudice against it.—The water poured over the sacrifice of Elijah did not tend to damp the materials more than the prejudices, darkness, and natural hatred of our hearts tend to damp all divine impressions. Shall I not then, blessed Jesus, adore the riches of thy grace, in that thou condescendest to kindle a flame of faith in my heart, when every thing that pride, ignorance, self-righteousness, and an unconscious state of my own condition, and thy suitableness as a Saviour, stood in opposition against it? Blessed Jesus! everlasting praise to thy dear name, like the sacrifice of the prophet, the fire of thy love and mercy hath descended from heaven and consumed all. And my soul hath been constrained to say not only, The Lord he is the God; but that the Lord is my light, my Jesus, my salvation, my God and Saviour for ever.

CHAP. XIX.

CONTENTS.

The event in the destruction of Baal's prophets calling forth the anger of Jezebel, Elijah fleeth to the wilderness of Beersheba. The Lord comforts him there. He returns by God's command, and anoints Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha.

AND Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

What an awful character is Ahab! one might reasonably have expected that after such a miracle, and such mercy in God's answering by fire, and sending rain to refresh his inheritance, that the heart of Ahab, with all Israel, would have been turned to the Lord. But Reader! learn from what is here said, that neither punishment nor mercy, can of themselves reclaim. Nay; I do verily believe that if the souls in everlasting misery could be liberated from their sufferings, and were permitted to return to the earth again, their hearts would remain unchanged. Oh! for grace, free, sovereign grace, to turn our souls from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and satan unto the living God.

2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to *me*, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time.

And what a most detestable character is this Jezebel! was ever so daring a threat; and backed, as she sent it, by such an impious authority! Reader! what views hath the Holy Ghost given us in many parts of his blessed word, of the dreadful lengths to which the human mind is capable of being led by its own corruptions, and the temptations of Satan!

3 And when he saw *that*, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which *belongeth* to Judah, and left his servant there.

4 ¶ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I *am* not better than my fathers.

Is this Elijah, who but the day before confronted all the host of Baal's worshippers? What, to flee because of the threats of a poor woman? And moreover, at a time like this, when after such a miracle he had reason from his own prayer to hope, that the Lord would turn the heart of the people back again! But Reader! let you and I learn from it, that great faith and unbelief are near neighbours in the same heart. Some of the Lord's highest servants have given striking testimonies of both. Abraham could, and did, at the Lord's command, offer up his son. But Abraham could not trust to God for the safety of his wife. Gen. xxii. with xx. 1, 2. Peter could, and did, at the command of Jesus, venture to walk to him upon the water. But the same great apostle, at the instance of a poor servant-maid, denied Christ. Matt. xiv. 28. Matt. xxvi. 72,

&c. And what are the precious lessons the Holy Ghost teacheth us from such views of the faithful, but these; that faith is God's gift, not man's own creating: that as Paul saith, we can do nothing of ourselves; but can do all things through Christ strengthening us. And therefore we can never trust ourselves too little, nor Jesus too much.

5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, *Arise and eat.*

6 And he looked, and, behold, *there was* a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

7 And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, *Arise and eat*; because the journey *is* too great for thee.

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

Oh! Reader! do pray observe the tender mercy of a gracious God. Had the Lord taken Elijah at his word, what a sad event! instead of which we find the angel of the Lord feeding him. I cannot suffer the Reader to go on without pausing to remark with me, in what a variety of gracious ways the Lord fed his servant. By ravens at one time; by a widow woman at another. Now by an angel; and now for forty days without food he is preserved. And was he not here a type of his adored Lord and master? Can I look at Elijah from the wilderness of Judah, strengthened for a forty days abstinence in Horeb, without calling to mind thine unequalled abstinence, dearest Jesus, when added to the hunger of the body, and the conflicts of the soul, Satan was permitted to spend all the fiery darts of his temptations upon thee?

9 ¶ And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

Some have thought that this was the very spot in which Moses was placed when the Lord shewed him his glory. If so, how sweet a token of the presence of Jesus. For Jesus is all the goodness of Jehovah passing by, considered in redemption. So thought the church when she said: *Oh! my dove, that art in the clefts of the rocks, in the secret places of the stairs; let me see thy countenance: let me hear thy voice.* Song ii. 14. But the word of the Lord came to him also similar to the voice which spake to Adam in the garden; *Adam! where art thou?* What doest thou here, Elijah? However solemn and alarming to both, and though

speaking in a way of demand, yet to both the words were alike full of grace and mercy. Reader! do remark from the enquiry that all communion and converse between God and sinners through Jesus, begins in a sense of our wrong conduct, and the Lord's rich and free mercy.

10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away.

Observe how even faithful men seek at times to justify themselves. Alas! what is man in his highest attainments!

11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD: *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake:

12 And after the earthquake a fire: *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

13 And it *was so*, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And behold, *there came* a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

What an awful display of the divine power and the divine presence! Moses stood *within* the cave when the Lord passed by. But Elijah is commanded to *go forth*, and stand *before* the Lord upon the mount. Do observe, Reader, the Lord's passing by, and the strong wind rending the mountains, and breaking the rocks in pieces, the earthquake, and the fire; but the Lord was not discovered by the prophet in either of them: neither did he cover his face in his mantle until he heard the still small voice. So is it with the sinner. Not the most dreadful things of God's wrath, the terrors of the law, the alarms of threatening justice, nor even the apprehensions of hell, and everlasting misery, though passing before his view, will compel him to cover his face in shame and confusion, and make him tremblingly cry out, *Lord! save or I perish*; until the Lord himself speaks to him in the still small voice. Reader! have you heard that voice? Hath your soul passed under the condemning sentence of God's law, and are you fled from it to the Lamb of God for salvation! if

so, you will know by your own feelings, better than by any words that I can make use of, to convey a sense of these grand things. A soul that hath so been led, and both from the sentence of death in himself, and a manifestation of life, and pardon, and peace in Jesus and his righteousness, hath been enabled to venture and rest his eternal welfare on this sure foundation, will read this passage of the prophet with such enlightened eyes as none but such exercised souls can ever discover. Blessed Reader! I may say if this be your happy case, oh! what a precious thing it is to have a Christ to plead, and a Christ to justify, when both law and justice give in a verdict against the soul.

14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria;

16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

17 And it shall come to pass, *that* him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.

18 Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

In this answer of the Lord to the complaint of the prophet, which he had before in the same words lodged with the Lord, we discover new tokens of the Lord's graciousness. Elijah, poor man, with his dim-sighted observation, concluded that he was the only faithful servant remaining. While to the Lord's view seven thousand were in Israel, and how many more in Judah whose hearts were with the Lord! Reader! never forget, as Paul makes the comment upon it, in the worst of times the Lord hath a remnant that serve him. And remember also that this remnant is of the Lord's reserving. Jesus must have a church, a seed, a people! precious thought! oh! let us cherish it in the warm foldings of the heart. But let us remark also that, in answer to the complaint of the prophet,

the Lord graciously preserved Hazael still to be king over Syria; and he shall punish Israel for their idolatry. Jehu shall be king over Israel, and he shall punish the house of Ahab for all his daring impiety. And since Elijah desired to have his services closed, the Lord hath provided him a successor in Elisha.

19 ¶ So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* plowing *with* twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?

The call of Elisha is very striking. It was wholly unexpected, unlooked for on his part; but on the Lord's part long ordained, long intended. What a proof we have of this in the call of Jeremiah. *Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, (saith the Lord) and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.* Jerem. i. 5. And depend upon it, so it is in the appointment of all God's sent servants. See a beautiful instance in the case of Saul and Barnabas. Acts xiii. 2. Acts ix. 15, 16. Of all subjects none can be more important than that every one who ministers in holy things should see to it that his call is clear. Most awful it is to rush into the ministry unsent; and most awful in the end will be that solemn question, *Who hath required this at your hands?* And assuredly that awful sentence which will follow: Isaiah i. 12. Matt. vii. 22, 23. In the instance of Elijah we see all the marks following the Lord's declaration to Elijah. The mantle of Elijah was accompanied with the Spirit of Elijah's God. He was made willing in the day of his power. Thus the Lord prevents, or goes before-hand with the sweet influences of his grace. Disposes the heart, constrains the mind, and leads the soul to follow the soft calls of his grace. Reader! as it is by his ministers, so is it by the private believer. The Lord passeth by when we are in our blood, and bids us live. Ezek. xvi. 6. The Lord gives grace to follow his call, notwithstanding both the unexpectedness of the call, and our unpreparedness to receive it; and yet more, all our undeservings: and though the whole life of grace as much exceeds all we can ask or think, as his thoughts exceed our thoughts, or his ways our ways. Ephes. iii. 20.

21 And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, Reader! over this chapter, and take another view, not less profitable to our souls, though less to the prophet's honour, than what we regarded before in the conduct of Elijah. In the former chapter we beheld him, indeed, *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. But here we see him, and human nature in him, shrinking at the bare apprehension of fear, and running away from the post of duty, as if Elijah's God could no more save. But Reader! let me charge it upon my own heart, while I earnestly and affectionately recommend it to yours, let neither of us lose sight of the sweet and blessed lesson the Holy Ghost most graciously holds forth to our view, in the contemplation of the short-comings of his faithful servants. When we see a prophet thus shrinking with fear at the threat of Jezebel; or an apostle, like Peter, at the charge of a servant maid; for what doth the example serve in either case, in such eminent followers of the Lord, but to teach us how far short the highest characters are from perfection; and that they, as well as we, stand in need of the same justifying righteousness of the Lord Jesus, whose holy life is the only righteousness which comes up to the standard of the divine law. Yes! dearest, blessed Jesus! most fully we are hereby taught, and our souls rejoice in the contemplation, that none but thou canst justify thy people. *In thy name, O Lord, would my soul rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness make my boast.*

Let us, Reader, also gather another sweet lesson from this chapter; and in the precious assurance the Lord gives his prophet, that while he thought himself the only one left of the Lord's servants, there were seven thousand; let us take comfort that even now, in the present dark and degenerate day, there is still *a remnant according to the election of grace*. Yes! Reader! though it be but a remnant, and a small remnant, yet Jesus hath said; *Fear not little flock, it is your heavenly Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*. Jesus will preserve it. For it is the Father's gift; it is Jesus's own purchase; and the conquest of his Spirit's grace on the heart; and therefore it must be preserved. And however small, or inconsiderable in the eyes of men, yet when the whole come to be brought together in glory, it will form *a multitude which no man can number*. *In my Father's house, (saith Jesus) there are many mansions*. Lord! grant, if it be thy blessed will, both to Writer and Reader, to be found among that multitude.

Lastly. Reader! let both of us from this chapter be very diligent while reading the call of Elisha, to see that we make *our calling and election sure*. Oh! for grace to discover the preventing, unexpected, unmerited and sovereign call of God! Dearest Jesus! do thou pass by, and cast thy mantle upon us: thou Lord God of the prophets! do thou give us the yielding, willing heart, to follow thee at thy call. And do thou grant that we may leave the oxen, the cares of the world, father and mother, and all creature enjoyments, and like Elisha, run after thee whithersoever thou goest; and like Ruth, to Naomi, may resolve to live with thee, and to die with thee, convinced that *to live is Christ, and to die is gain*. Oh! for faith, precious faith to have Jesus for our portion; for in him *we have all things*.

CHAP. XX.

CONTENTS.

This chapter relates more to the history of Israel as a nation, than to the government of the church. It informs us of a battle between Syria and Israel, in which the Syrians are worsted. Ahab doth not avail himself of his victory, for which he is reproved by the prophet.

AND Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and *there were* thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it.

2 And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad,

3 Thy silver and thy gold *is* mine; thy wives also and thy children, *even* the goodliest, *are* mine.

4 And the king of Israel answered and said, My Lord, O king, according to thy saying, I *am* thine, and all that I have.

During the time that Israel served the Lord, the Lord made all their enemies submissive. But when Israel rebelled against the Lord, the enemies of Israel became formidable. We may spiritualize this passage with great safety. While the Lord's people live in dutiful affection to Jesus, *he maketh even their enemies to be at peace with them.* But when they leave their first love, many subdued foes gain their ascendancy. But what an object still is the soul of that man reduced to by sin, that, like Ahab, will rather live a pensioner upon the devil's favor, than die a freed servant of the Lord of hosts.

5 And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Ben-hadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children;

6 Yet I will send my servants unto thee to morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, *that* whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put *it* in their hand, and take *it* away.

Reader! And is not this the language of the enemy of souls to his vassals? Is not the man that committeth sin, the servant and slave of sin?

And if we have yielded ourselves servants to such a tyrant, and such a master; can we expect any thing but rigour in his treatment?

7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this *man* seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold: and I denied him not.

8 And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not *unto him*, nor consent.

9 Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-hadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again.

10 And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.

11 And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell *him*, Let not him that girdeth on *his harness* boast himself as he that putteth it off.

The historical sense of this passage, is what is very common in human life. A proud, imperious character triumphing over a less, and the oppressed obliged to submit, until overacted oppression compels the trampled upon to resist. But the spiritual sense is sweeter. While the enemy of souls, like Pharaoh, threatens total ruin; the believer in Jesus saith, I know that my God can, and I trust that he will deliver. We have a beautiful example in the case of the three servants of the Lord; see Dan. iii. 16—18.

12 And it came to pass, when *Ben-hadad* heard this message, as he *was* drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set *yourselves in array*. And they set *themselves in array* against the city.

So the enemy, confident of victory, sets on with his legions on our poor nature.

13 ¶ And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I

will deliver it into thine hand this day ; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

14 And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, *Even* by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou.

15 Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two: and after them he numbered all the people, *even* all the children of Israel, *being* seven thousand.

Observe the graciousness of God. Though Ahab be so undeserving: and though Israel be so undeserving also, in general; yet the Lord hath his seven thousand in Israel, for whose sakes the city must be preserved. Oh! how much, could it be calculated, do the ungodly owe to the Lord's people! See sweet examples, Gen. xix. 22. Isa. i. 9. lxxv. 8.

16 And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad *was* drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him.

17 And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria.

18 And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive.

19 So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them.

20 And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Assyria escaped on an horse with the horsemen.

21 And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.

Observe how true God is to his promises.

22 And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest: for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee.

23 And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods *are* gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.

24 And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms:

25 And number thee an army, like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, *and* surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so.

26 And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Ben-hadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel.

27 And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country.

28 And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD *is* God of the hills, but he *is* not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

29 And they pitched one over against the other seven days. And *so* it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day.

30 But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city ; and *there* a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men *that were* left. And Ben-hadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber.

I pass over the mere history itself, to call the Reader to the spiritual lessons arising out of it. See, Reader ! how confident the enemies of our God and of his Christ are : and see how the Lord, amidst all the undeservings of his people, is merciful. But, as in the case of Ahab's history, so in the history of the Lord's Israel, every thing speaks the same language : *Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake.* Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 23. There is a similar gracious reason given in Moses' song. Deut. xxxii. 26, 27.

31 ¶ And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel *are* merciful kings : let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel ; peradventure he will save thy life.

32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and *put* ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, *Is* he yet alive ? he *is* my brother.

33 Now the men did diligently observe whether *any thing would come* from him, and did hastily catch it : and they said, Thy brother Ben-hadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him ; and he caused him to come up into the chariot.

34 And *Ben-hadad* said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore ; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then *said Ahab*, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.

I would again pass over the mere history, to gather somewhat spiritual. Is not Ben-hadad like the proud sinner when humbled and brought low ?

Doth he not come, as with a rope round his neck, and sackcloth on his loins, like one ready for execution; confessing, after all his proud and self-righteous language, that now, the weapons of sin being taken out of his hands, he merits nothing but punishment in the very moment he pleads for mercy. Reader! depend upon it, every truly awakened sinner doth so; and while he sues for pardon, confesses he deserves it not. I dare not represent the clemency of our dear Jesus by such a character as Ahab, in his kindness to Ben-hadad. But yet, I may say, without the danger of sullyng the holiness of the Saviour, by the view of the sinner; that in reading the account that Ahab called his enemy brother, and caused him to ride in his chariot, it reminded me of thy tender mercy, thou who art mercy itself, in that thou not only condescendest to receive sinners, and to eat with them; but on the cross, and now in glory, thou commendest thy love to us, in that while we were enemies, thou didst die for us. And not only is it said of thee, that thou art not ashamed to call such brethren; but hast shewn thyself, *a brother indeed born for adversity; one that loveth at all times, notwithstanding our undeservings; and who sticketh closer than a brother.* Oh! unparalleled love, and matchless grace of our Jesus! Prov. xvii. 17. Psm. xxii. 22. Prov. xviii. 24.

35 ¶ And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the LORD, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him.

36 Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him.

37 Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded *him*.

38 So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face.

39 And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver.

40 And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto

him, So *shall* thy judgment *be*; thyself hast decided *it*.

41 And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he *was* of the prophets.

42 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of *thy* hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.

43 And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria.

Who this certain man of the sons of the prophets was is not said. The Jews have concluded that it was Micaiah, of whom we read in the 22d chapter, because Ahab expresses in that chapter his hatred of him on account of his prophesying evil. But, be it whom it might, certain it is, that he came to Ahab in the name of the LORD. The story he feigned was just corresponding to the real state of the case. The Lord had delivered his enemy into his hand; and he, without consulting the Lord, had let him escape. And the prediction, that his life should pay the forfeiture for the life of Benhadad, and the people of Israel for the Syrians, came to pass. Chap. xxii. 35.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! the perusal of this chapter ministers to our minds two very opposite reflections; but both such as may be rendered sweet and profitable under the Lord's teaching. It is hardly possible to look at Ahab in the determined hardness of a corrupt heart, which neither the fear of man nor the mercy of God proved sufficient to subdue, but with the most painful consideration on the awful state of the wicked. To what an extent of power must Satan have reigned and ruled in this man's mind! Deaf to all danger: to all the alarming providences of God around him! Deaf to all the calls of grace and mercy: neither moved by the alarms of Benhadad's army, any more than as it concerned temporal safety: nor moved by the gracious message of God, though twice repeated, and as often followed with the promised deliverance: we hear nothing of his expressing any sense of his undeserving; nor of his thankfulness for the great and unmerited deliverance. Having eyes and seeing not; and having ears, and hearing not; neither regarding the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands.

But how blessed is it, in the midst of all the unworthiness and continued provocations of Ahab and of his people, to see the Lord still saving his Israel and remembering his covenant-mercy. Oh, Lord! let these precious tokens of thy love comfort my soul, amidst all mine unhallowed and soul-distressing departures I am continually making from thee. Oh, Holy Father! let me never forget that tender, that unparalleled

love of thine, who, though thou knewest I should be a transgressor from the womb, still didst not keep back thy Son, thine only blessed Son, but gave him up for my salvation! Oh! most precious Jesus! cause my soul to hang for ever on thee, in the contemplation of thine unheard of mercy, when for my sake thou didst endure the cross, despise the shame, and art now sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high. And oh! thou Holy Ghost, the Comforter! for ever blessed be thy matchless love to me, in that thou hast condescended, in defiance of all my carnal enmity and hatred to the ways of salvation, which by nature my whole frame was full of, to become my teacher, and to make me willing in the day of thy power! Oh! Lord God! Jehovah! now reign and rule in all, and over all my affections, that while, like Ahab, men of the world go down to their houses heavy and displeased, I may come to Zion with Songs of everlasting joy upon my head, with all the redeemed of thy people; and sorrow and sighing may flee away for ever.

CHAP. XXI.

CONTENTS.

The history of Ahab still continues a melancholy, because a sinful history, to the end. Here he is presented to us as coveting his neighbour's vineyard. By Jezebel's stratagem he succeeds. Elijah is sent to him with an awful message from God.

AND it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

2 And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

3 And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

The sin of Ahab, in coveting this vineyard of Naboth, will not so fully appear, unless we connect with it the law of God, concerning the possessions of Israel in Canaan. The Lord had solemnly commanded, that no land in Israel should be sold off from the proprietor for ever. For, even in case of extreme poverty, at the year of jubilee, if the poor Israelite's poverty, before this year, prevented him from repurchasing it; unbought in that year, it was to revert back to the original owner again. And there can be no doubt, but that a blessed gospel mercy of redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ, was veiled under this command. Indeed the

matter is so plain, that a reference only to the scriptures concerning it, will be sufficient proof: see Levit. xxv. 23—28. Well might Naboth therefore excuse himself, and say, The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

5 ¶ But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread.

6 And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee *another* vineyard for it; and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

Whether Jezebel communicated to her husband the plan of villany, by which she would accomplish this diabolical deed, is not said—But whether or not; both she and her husband were implicated in the sin and consequent punishment.

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed *them* with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that *were* in his city, dwelling with Naboth.

9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

10 And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And *then* carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

11 And the men of his city, *even* the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it *was*

written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

13 And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, *even* against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.

Nothing can exceed the deliberate purposes of sin in this most atrocious deed. Religion is first called in to the aid of it. A fast is to be proclaimed, as if under the judgments of the Lord, the nations were to be assembled to humble themselves before him. Justice and judgment also to men, shall be apparently regarded for the poor unconscionable Naboth, for the accomplishment of whose death, this mockery, both of religion and justice, was to be observed, shall be confronted by witnesses, as if jealous of God's honor and glory. Reader! let me beg of you, never to peruse such instances of cruelty and oppression, without pausing to consider, to what a state of sin our nature is sunk; and what mercy it must have been in our Jesus, to recover our nature from it.

15 And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.

16 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

After looking with horror and astonishment at the murderous prince, in this expedition to take possession of his prey, I would beg the Reader to turn to the 9th chapter of the 2d Book of the Kings, and read the 25th verse, and there he will discover that Jehu, who attended Ahab, as his master on that expedition, was the very person deputed by the Lord to revenge the blood of Naboth on Jezebel; see also 33d and 34th verses. Neither is it a subject less worthy of remark in this place, that as the elders of Jezreel were so forward to execute Jezebel's orders for the murder of Naboth; so were the elders of Samaria equally

obedient to execute Jehu's orders, in the after reign, for the destruction of the 70 sons of Ahab. Surely the judgment of God lingereth not, and the destruction of sinners slumbereth not. See 2 Kings x. 1—7.

17 ¶ And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

18 Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel which *is* in Samaria: behold, *he is* in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it.

19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? and he answered, I have found *thee*: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.

21 Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel,

22 And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked *me* to anger, and made Israel to sin,

23 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

24 Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat,

25 But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

26 And he did very abominably in following

idols, according to all *things* as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

Observe in this account, how the Lord's eye had been looking on through the whole transaction. He did not stop Jezebel's proceedings. He did not stay the minds of the elders of Jezreel; no! nor the hands of the common executioners, who stoned Naboth. In the government of the world, how often do the oppressed cry out by reason of the oppressor! Nay, Reader! look at the cross of Christ! think of that! Paul sums up the account, when he saith, *He spared not his own Son.* Rom. viii. 32. Is the Reader at a loss to explain these things? The Bible fully doth it for him. *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.* This one assurance answers all inquiries. And oh! what a precious thought is it, that He who will preside there as Judge, is at the same time, the Saviour and Brother of his people.

27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.

28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

29 Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; *but* in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

Though Ahab humbled himself before the Lord, and, like another Felix, trembled; yet we read nothing of his heart being turned towards the Lord. But behold the graciousness of God. The evil day is postponed, intimating the Lord's readiness to pardon, and his reluctance to punish. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel; how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?* Hosea xi. 8.

REFLECTIONS.

It is impossible to behold human nature, as represented in such characters as Ahab and Jezebel, but with the most humiliating pain and sorrow, from our connection in the general mass. When I consider that, by nature, we are all alike children of wrath, enemies to God by wicked works; oh! how humbling is the view! But when, through grace, our souls are brought to look at the rock whence we are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence we are digged; oh! how precious, how inestimably precious is that mercy, which is so distinguishing. Never, blessed Jesus; never, I beseech thee, dearest Lord and Saviour, suffer me to read of such awful characters in thy sacred word, without feeling the blessedness of that question of thy servant the apostle, ap-

plied and brought home to my soul; *Who maketh thee to differ from another: and what hast thou which thou didst not receive?* And, Lord! suffer me to ask another mercy from thee: while beholding the miseries of our nature, the sufferings of the oppressed, and the cruelty of their oppressors; oh! give me to behold the virtue, the efficacy, the merit, the power, the all-sufficiency of thy precious blood, in cleansing from all sin. Here let me gaze on thee and thy cross, until my whole soul goeth forth in the most ardent faith and dependance upon thee. Lord! impress upon my mind, in yet stronger characters, thy eternal excellency. And let my dying moments bear one uniform correspondence with my living conviction; that *salvation is in no other; neither is there any other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

CHAP. XXII.

CONTENTS.

In this chapter, some account of the history of the kingdom of Judah, which hath not been taken notice of during the five preceding chapters, is again revived. After a three years peace between Syria and Israel, war is sounded afresh, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, joins Ahab, king of Israel, in the battle at Ramoth-Gilead. Ahab is slain. Ahaziah succeeds him. Some account of Jehoshaphat's reign.

AND they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel.

2 And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

It is a little extraordinary that Jehoshaphat, whose conduct is said to have been right in the sight of the Lord, should visit so impious a prince as Ahab. Reader! depend upon it, the people of God can have no profitable society or fellowship with carnal men. That is an universal precept, and founded upon the soundest principles: 2 Cor. vi. 14—18.

3 And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead *is* ours, and we *be* still, *and* take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria.

4 And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead? and Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I *am* as thou *art*, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.

We see here the ill consequence of the visit. The king of Judah is

drawn into a battle. But how could Jehoshaphat wound his conscience so much, as to allow Israel and Judah, and himself and Ahab, to be so much alike? Surely he meant only in earthly concerns.

5 And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day.

I beg the Reader to admire Jehoshaphat's piety in this instance. Though he knew well the infamous idolatry of Ahab, yet he calls upon him to consult the Lord. Reader! it is always profitable to look up for guidance from heaven, before we undertake any thing upon earth. That is a blessed maxim: Prov. iii. 5, 6.

6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? and they said, Go up; for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

I think that these 400 men were the false prophets who were fed at Jezebel's table. By such the Lord never speaks. Though they used the Lord's name, yet they were not the Lord's servants. The Lord himself hath marked, in very plain terms, the character of such: His account of such will, for the most part, serve all ages of the church, as well now as then: see Jerem. xxiii. 21 to the end.

7 And Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?

8 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is* yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophecy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

What a delightful character, though undesignedly, doth Ahab here give of Micaiah! Reader! mark it down for a standard, in some degree, to ascertain faithful ministers by, in the present hour. Do they deal faithfully between God and souls: then are they abused by the carnal? Depend upon it, faithful dealing must bring reproach.

9 Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten *hither* Micaiah the son of Imlah.

10 And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes in a void place in the entrance of the

gate of Samaria ; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

11 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron : and he said, Thus saith the LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them.

12 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper : for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the king's hand.

13 And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets *declare* good unto the king with one mouth : let thy word, I pray thee, be, like the word of one of them, and speak *that which is good*.

14 And Micaiah said, *As* the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

15 So he came to the king ; and the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear ? And he answered him, Go, and prosper : for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

16 And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but *that which is true* in the name of the LORD ?

It is probable, that poor Micaiah is the same that spake to Ahab, as we read in the 20th chapter, 35, 42. In the opening his commission, though in the first reading of what he said, *Go and prosper*, it should seem as if he concurred with the other prophets ; yet by the king's answer, it is plain that Ahab himself thought that he was only echoing their words in contempt, and that he thought otherwise. So that Micaiah was only hereby preparing both the king, and the people around him, to attend more particularly to his prophecy.

17 And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd : and the LORD said, These have no master : let them return every man to his house in peace.

18 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophecy no good concerning me, but evil ?

19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

22 And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said thou shalt persuade *him*, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.

That Micaiah had been favoured with a divine vision, upon this occasion, is evident: for his prediction, and the event so exactly corresponding, plainly proved it. With respect to the lying spirit here spoken of, as influencing the prophets, to the destruction of Ahab: as this is an interesting part, and perhaps is not so generally understood; the pious Reader will not be displeased if I detain him with a few observations upon that subject. That there is at the head of our spiritual enemies, a leader, called Satan, who had a principal hand in the ruin of our nature at the fall; and who from that time, hath ruled, more or less, in the minds of the children of disobedience, is a doctrine, I take for granted, no wise person will venture to question, or deny. That the Son of God came to destroy his kingdom, is also an undoubted, and thoroughly allowed truth. That therefore, in this instance he had permission, by the mouths of the false prophets, to deceive Ahab; and that in numberless other instances, his power hath been, and still is, exerted (only limited as the wisdom of Jesus for blessed purposes allows) to influence the corrupt passions of men: scripture so decidedly shews, that it must argue great folly, as well as great wickedness, to dispute it. That the prophet Micaiah, therefore, should be taught this by the ministry of a vision, seems agreeable to the whole analogy of the divine word. And with respect both to the permission and success of his deception, when we consider what Job saith, and Paul confirms, the whole is most fully and satisfactorily explained. The former tells us, from inspired authority, that *both the deceiver and deceived are his*. And the latter, that *in those that perish with the deceivableness of unrighteous-*

ness in the working of Satan, it is for this cause, God hath sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. See Job xii. 16. 2 Thess. ii. 9—11. If the Reader would see more on this subject, I refer him to Job ii. 1. Of Satan's power in putting into the heart, as in the case of Judas; John xiii. 2: Of filling the heart, as in Ananias; Acts v. 3: Of making the whole man full of subtilty, as in Elymas; Acts xiii. 9; 10: And of reigning and ruling in the children of disobedience at his will; see Eph. ii. 2. 2 Tim. i. 26.

24 But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?

25 And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.

In all ages false prophets have been the bitterest foes of God's faithful servants!

26 And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;

27 And say, Thus saith the king, Put this *fellow* in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.

28 And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me. And he said, Harken, O people, every one of you.

Observe the cruelty of Ahab. Hard fare and coarse food, poor requitals for faithfulness. But how much sweeter to Micaiah all this than the rich fare of Jezebel's table with the impending ruin. Paul's prison must have been a blessed place when the Holy Ghost was so much with him as to enable him to send forth that charming Epistle to the church at Philippi, which he wrote in his confinement at Rome. See the Epistle to the Philippians. And John found cause to bless the hour of his banishment to Patmos, which brought him such a visitor as the Lord Jesus. See Rev. i. &c.

29 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.

It is not a wonder that Ahab should persist in going to battle, after Micaiah's prophecy; because he was given up to his ruin. But that Jehoshaphat, who desired counsel to be sought of the Lord upon the occasion, should have gone after what he had heard, is not so easily to be explained.

30 And the king of Israel said unto Jehosha-

phat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.

31 But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.

32 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it *is* the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out.

33 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it *was* not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

There seems to have been a good deal of art in Ahab's thus disguising himself, and advising Jehoshaphat to go in his robes. It is probable that he had heard of the king of Syria's command to his generals, to fight only with the king of Israel. And as the person of Ahab was not known to those generals, it is very probable that Ahab pleased himself with the idea that the robes of Jehoshaphat would expose him, and his own disguise conceal himself. So that Ahab, if so, was as defective in friendship to Jehoshaphat, as in duty to the Lord. And no doubt, he that is false to God can never be true to man. The danger of Jehoshaphat, no doubt, taught him that he was out of the path of duty. In the parallel history in the Book of the Chronicles, we are told somewhat more particularly of this situation and conduct of the king of Judah. For there it is said that when the Syrians compassed him around to kill him, and he cried out, *the Lord helped him, and God moved them to depart from him*. And that when Jehoshaphat returned to his own home after the battle, the son of Hanani, the seer, who went out to meet him, *reproved him for having gone to the help of the ungodly*; and that therefore the *wrath of the Lord was upon him*. See 2 Chron. xviii. 31, and ch. xix. 1, 2.

34 And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

A *certain man* is a very decisive expression in the word of God. In this place it was the very man commissioned of the Lord; for the Lord both strung the bow, directed to the mark, and found out Ahab amidst

all his disguise, and a way to his heart in spite of all his armour. Alas! how could he think to escape when God pronounced his sentence?

35 And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.

36 And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.

37 ¶ So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.

Think, Reader! what an awful death this was, amidst the horrors of Naboth's blood calling for vengeance; and the God of Israel's altars, which he had caused to be deserted for Baal's calling for judgment.

38 And *one* washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake.

39 Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel!

40 So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

The Holy Ghost is particular in causing to be related the circumstance of dogs licking his blood, by way of fulfilling his servant the Prophet's word, and shewing with what contempt his death was followed. And thus ended the life of this worthless, unprincipled man!

41 ¶ And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.

42 Jehoshaphat *was* thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

43 And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD: neverthe-

less the high places were not taken away ; *for* the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places.

44 And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.

45 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he shewed, and how he warred, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah.

46 And the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land.

47 *There was* then no king in Edom : a deputy *was* king.

48 Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold : but they went not ; for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber.

49 Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not.

50 And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father : and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

The subject in those verses turns to the history of the other kingdom of Judah, and honourable mention is made of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah. The account of this prince is but short in the book of the Kings ; but it is more largely dwelt upon in the book of the Chronicles. He seems to have fallen under the divine displeasure in consequence of his forming an alliance with Ahab and his son Ahaziah. And his want of success upon those occasions at length taught him to withdraw his connections. But it appears, upon the whole, that he was a good king, and Judah flourished under his government. See 2 Chron. xvii. 20.

51 ¶ Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel.

52 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the

way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin :

53 For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

This is but the beginning of the short reign of Ahaziah. But short as it was, it was too long in evil. Alas! what a melancholy account, for the most part, is the statement given of the reigns of such men. The relation generally runs in the same words; *He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father.* O Lord! what is the sum total of man's history, but of man's sinfulness, and thy grace. Doth not every act of thine speak in language like thine, O Lord, by the Prophet; *I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger: I will not return to destroy Israel: for I am God, and not man: the Holy One in the midst of thee.* Hosea xi. 9.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us not close this first book of the Kings without taking with it into our minds the many gracious lessons the great author of it evidently intended that the church in all ages should gather from the records contained in it. In passing over the lives, the actions, and pursuits of the several successive monarchs it holds forth to view, we behold, though diversified by various characters, one general subject, though here and there it may be a page a little less stained with evil, of the dreadful effects of pride and ambition. In general a total departure from God. *The form* indeed with some kept up, but *the power of godliness* wanting. For though we make some exceptions, as in the instance of Solomon in the former part of his reign, yet after all allowances to soften the shades of the history, what is the whole picture but a perspective of fallen man exercising the long-suffering and patience of a most gracious covenant-God.

In the lives of the few faithful servants and prophets of the Lord, raised up to minister in holy things amidst the general corruption, how delightful it is to read that the Lord hath not, and will not, cast away his people whom he foreknew. The period promised shall come. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Successive ministers in his church shall arise to keep alive the remembrance of this great event. And with an eye to him, in whom all nations of the earth shall be blessed, the Lord will have his heart engaged for Israel, from one end of the year even to the other end of the year.

Blessed Jesus! thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Stedfastly would I fix my eye on thee while passing through the several ages, and the reigns of those monarchs in Israel and Judah. And when I behold thy church oppressed, thy worship despised; idols desecrating thine altars, and impious men profaning thy sanctuary; I would be consoling myself with the assurance that in the worst of times thou hast a seed that serve thee; and while thy faithful ones are discouraged, as if none were left to call thee blessed, many a thousand yet

thine eyes regard, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. *The glorious Lord therefore will be unto his people at all times a place of broad rivers, and streams wherein shall go no galley with oars; neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge! the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king; he will save us!*

Hail! then, thou blessed Lord God, ЖЕHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! the gracious almighty covenanters in redemption. All scripture joins issue in this, and all the faithful rest secured in the mercy, that the Lord is bringing home his church through the wilderness of this world to glory; and whether evil men, or devils, rise up in confederacy against it, or whether by terrible things in righteousness the LORD is pleased to work, that period is ripening, and will unfold its blessed fruit in the very moment already appointed; *The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.—Amen.*

THE
SECOND BOOK OF THE KINGS,
COMMONLY CALLED
THE FOURTH BOOK OF THE KINGS.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

AS this *Second Book* of the Kings is but a continuation of the same subject as the *First*; it may not be amiss to remark, that the same general observations, which were proposed to the Reader's consideration in the opening of the *former*, will be proper to be kept in remembrance at the entrance on *this*. The Reader of discernment, whose mind is under divine teaching, will discover in this, as in the preceding book of the Kings, many precious things contained in it, beside the history itself: which, to an awakened, and enlightened understanding, will abundantly tend to satisfy him, both of its divine authority, and of the gracious design of the Holy Ghost, in causing it to be written, for the comfort and edification of the church in all ages.

Indeed there is one circumstance, and that of great note, to be attended to, in the perusal of the *second* book of the Kings, with which the *first* hath not such immediate connection: namely, that the greater part of the prophets, whose writings are placed at the end of the Bible, ministered to the church in their respective ages, during the period which this second book of the Kings records;