
THE SECOND

BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THIS *second* book of the Chronicles bears no proportion, in point of the time it records, to that of the former. For all the events registered in this volume, include the history of somewhat less than 500 years. It takes up the records of the church from about a thousand years before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the history is pursued through this book to the period of the Babylonish captivity.

The events recorded in this second book of the Chronicles, correspond, in point of history, to what is related in the first and second book of the Kings; but the Reader will do well to observe, what further accounts are given here, in addition to what were then recorded. The design of the Holy Ghost, (if one may presume so to speak) in the compilation of these Chronicles, is to preserve the history of the church of God, and especially in a faithful record of the regular descent of the family of David. The dying patriarch, Jacob, under the influence of God the Spirit had prophesied, that *the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until the Shiloh should come.* These Chronicles, when traced in a regular succession, and compared with what follows in the other books of sacred inspiration, lead the Reader on to the discovery of the fulfilment of this prophecy. Through the several monarchies which succeeded the *Babylonian*, to the coming of Christ, we trace the lineal descent of David's royal house. And as, through all the tributary state in which the church was brought, under the *Persian*, the *Grecian*, and at last the *Roman* government, the Jews never lost sight of their own king, neither their own laws; so it is worthy the highest attention, that under the *latter* empire, during which time the Lord Jesus came, the Jews themselves confessed, that *now they had no king but Cæsar.* Now therefore *the Shiloh was come.* And the royal house of David, in the person of Jesus, emerged from the obscurity in which it had been so long hid, and brought forward again that kingdom, *of the increase and government of which there shall be no end.*

I shall detain the Reader no longer from entering on the perusal of this book of God, but only, as in every former instance, so in this, to beg his eye may be always on the look out for Him, on whose ac-

count, and for whose great work of redemption, not only the Bible was written, but even creation itself, with all its magnificence, was appointed. It is offering no violence to truth, to believe that, as the Lord Jehovah from everlasting had determined the redemption of his people; when he went forth in acts of creation, these were preparatory to the more glorious deeds in redemption, which were to follow. And hence, every event from the creation of the world, to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, was designed as intermediate, and preparatory to the introduction of him, who though appearing in what is called *the fulness of time*, was in reality *set up from everlasting*. It is under the most perfect conviction of this, that I venture to beg again and again the Reader's most earnest enquiry through every page, for him to whom the whole ministers. And oh! thou Holy Spirit of truth; thou Glorifier of the Lord Jesus! let it please thee to call up the diligence, and to reward the search both of Writer and Reader in their enquiries, like the Greeks which came up to the feast, when like them, as we explore this feast of divine records, we say also, *We would see Jesus*. Be pleased, Lord, to hang out his star in the firmament of thy word, and by a more luminous light of thy grace within our souls, lead us, and go before us, until it points to the place where the Lord Jesus is. One such view of thee, thou blessed Jesus! discovered in those Chronicles of thy church, in manifesting both thy love then and now, will give *a joy unspeakable, and full of glory*; and become a renewed evidence, to all the numbers we are continually receiving, that thou art indeed *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*.

CHAP. I.

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This second book of Chronicles takes up the subject of history where the former left off. Solomon's entrance on his reign is here recorded: his solemn offering at Gibeon: his choice of wisdom: his strength, and riches.

AND Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God *was* with him, and magnified him exceedingly.

2 Then Solomon spake unto all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every governor in all Israel, the chief of the fathers.

3 So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that *was* at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation

of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness.

4 But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjath-jearim to *the place which* David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem.

5 Moreover the brasen altar, that Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD: and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it.

6 And Solomon went up thither to the brasen altar before the LORD, which *was* at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it.

There is somewhat very interesting in this view of Solomon, on his entrance on his government. How beautiful is it to see magistrates first seeking grace and wisdom from the Lord, before that they take the reins of government into their hand. Is not the custom of our nation, in the election of chief magistrates in towns and cities, being preceded by prayer, to direct them in their choice; is it not taken from such scripture authority as this? I shall not offend, I hope, any of this character, (if peradventure any such should condescend to glance their eye on my Poor Man's Commentary) when I add, it is a sight indeed most lovely, when men really and truly seek counsel from God on those occasions. Oh! what a beautiful portrait of magistracy hath Job drawn, when he says, *I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out.* When Jesus, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, gives out of himself to the men that seek for him as for hidden treasure; then he is, and will be all this to his people. I would wish the Reader to peruse the whole passage. Job xxix. 5—17. It should seem that the ark being at Jerusalem, and the altar at Gibeon, was for the present intended for the greater benefit of the church. Our Jesus is both the Ark and the Altar: and he, blessed be his name, is in all places, and with all his people always, even unto the end of the world. Matt. xxviii. 20.

7 ¶ In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.

8 And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.

9 Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto

David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.

10 Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, *that is so great?*

We have this account before, 1 Kings iii. 5. I must again beg the Reader to consult the parallel passage, both in the sacred text, and in the Commentary. For the sake of shortness, I shall not repeat what is there said. I only in addition, request the Reader to observe with me, how evident it is, from this prayer of Solomon, that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, to teach him what to say, and what to pray for. Observe how Solomon eyes the Lord's hand in his appointment as king. *Thou hast shewed mercy to David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.* Observe moreover, how Solomon begs for suited wisdom to the discharge of the high trust to which he was called. *Give me wisdom, that I may go in and out before this people.* And observe still further, that he founds all his claim upon God's promises; *Let thy promise unto David my father be established.* Reader! mark down what most concerns us in this view. Doth not our God say, *Ask what I shall give thee?* Not indeed in dreams of the night, but in the open full day of his gospel. So run the precious words, *Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.* John xvi. 24. And is not the promise of God the Father founded in covenant engagements, confirmed with an oath, and sealed in the blood of his dear Son? Shall we doubt? Shall we question the divine truth and faithfulness? Oh! how precious is it to see our security in this doubled grace; the glory of Jehovah's name, in his word and oath; and the everlasting merit and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ!

11 And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king:

12 Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that *have been* before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.

We have here God's gracious answer. And in the overflowing bounty of the Lord, how sweetly doth it remind us of what the apostle saith, that *God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.* Ephes. iii. 20. But I hope, after what was observed in the

parallel passage, (1 Kings iii.) that the Reader is running beyond his views of Solomon king of Israel, to contemplate in all this our Almighty Solomon, God the Father's Jedidiah (his beloved) shadowed forth in his furniture for the kingdom of his people. Jesus indeed, in his mediatorial character, was not only filled with wisdom and knowledge, and all the treasures hidden with him: but he is emphatically called Wisdom itself, even the Wisdom of God for salvation. Reader! behold then the Lord Jesus entering upon his kingdom, and in the constitution of his Person, in his offices, in all his characters, acts, and relations, unfolding to his church and people, the most sovereign proofs of wisdom, grace, and riches. How lovely is it to behold the features of the Redeemer, shadowed forth in any of his people!

13 Then Solomon came *from his journey* to the high place that *was* at Gibeon to Jerusalem, from before the tabernacle of the congregation, and reigned over Israel.

14 And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, which he placed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

15 And the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem *as plenteous* as stones, and cedar trees made he as the sycamore trees that *are* in the vale for abundance.

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

17 And they fetched up, and brought forth out of Egypt a chariot for six hundred *shekels* of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so brought they out *horses* for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, by their means.

I have before noticed those things in the Commentary on the same history, 1 Kings iii. &c. I only therefore now add, that when we read those things of Solomon's splendour with an eye to Jesus, what is the plenteousness of the silver and gold at Jerusalem, compared to the durable riches, and righteousness, which Jesus gives in plentiful profusion to his people, when he gives them himself? Then, in deed and in truth, Jesus causeth them to inherit *substance*; all else is vanity. Jesus's fruit is *better than gold, yea, than fine gold, and his revenue than choice silver*. Oh! thou precious Lord! lead me in the way of righteousness, and

cause me to inherit thyself, which is substance indeed! Prov. viii. 18—20.

REFLECTIONS.

I PASS over every other consideration in this chapter, to have my soul unceasingly fixed on thee, thou glorious Solomon, and the peaceable, happy reign of righteousness, which by thy coming to the throne of David thy father, thou, even thou, O blessed Jesus, hast brought in to the redemption of mankind! I cannot look on any other. I dare not take off my thoughts from the contemplation of Jesus! Thy word tells me, that in thee are hid *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. And to what other source shall I go, who am so poor and ignorant in myself, and need supply so continually, when all riches and honour are with thee, and there is none else that can cause my soul to inherit substance. Like the Solomon of whom I read in this chapter, I would say, *Give me understanding and knowledge*, that I may have that *life eternal*, which consisteth in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! Hath not God thy Father constituted thee King in Zion? Hath he not given all things into thine hand? Is not grace, mercy, life, and peace, treasured up in thee? And are not all the blessings thy redeemed can possibly need, in time or in eternity, found in thee? not simply as plenteous as the stones in Jerusalem, but inexhaustible, incalculable, unsearchable? Oh! then for faith to believe *the record which God hath given of his dear Son!* I would come to thee, blessed Jesus, for all I need. And I would come as one sure to obtain. For though thou hast all the treasures of heaven, and art the Almighty Treasurer, yet is it not for thyself, but for thy people. It hath pleased the Father, that in thee should all fulness dwell; that of thy fulness we might all receive, and grace for grace. Who so ready to give as Jesus! Who so needy as I! Pour out then, Lord, of thy fulness. I ask not the riches, the wealth, the honour of this vain world, but *the wisdom that maketh wise unto salvation*. I ask Jesus himself! Grant me thyself, O Lord, for in thee I have all things.

CHAP. II.

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This Chapter represents Solomon as beginning the work of the temple. He numbers the men for the service; sends to Hiram for materials: Hiram's kind answer.

AND Solomon determined to build an house for the name of the LORD, and an house for his kingdom.

2 And Solomon told out threescore and ten thousand men to bear burdens, and fourscore thousand to hew in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred to oversee them.

The account here given, is so very similar to what we read 1 Kings v. that once for all I refer the Reader to it.

3 ¶ And Solomon sent to Hiram the king of Tyre, saying, As thou didst deal with David my father, and didst send him cedars to build him an house to dwell therein, *even so deal with me.*

4 Behold, I build an house to the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate *it* to him, *and* to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual shewbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the LORD our God. *This is an ordinance* for ever to Israel.

5 And the house which I build *is* great: for great *is* our God above all gods.

6 But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who *am* I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?

7 Send me now therefore a man cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that *are* with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide.

8 Send me also cedar trees, fir trees, and algum trees, out of Lebanon: for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon; and, behold, my servants *shall be* with thy servants.

9 Even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build *shall be* wonderful great.

10 And, behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil.

The message here recorded, which Solomon sent to Hiram, is much

more particularly related than the parallel one in the book of the Kings. I beg the Reader to mark this. There is very great beauty, as well as piety, in that part of his address, in which he endeavours to impress upon the mind of Hiram suitable ideas of the greatness of the Lord God of Israel. He was asking favours of the king of Tyre; and the king of Tyre, for ought we know to the contrary, had but slender knowledge, if any, concerning Israel's God. Yet Solomon refrains not from magnifying the Lord God of Israel. He plainly tells Hiram, that his God is above all gods; that none was worthy, none was able to build an habitation suitable for his honour; that the heavens and the heaven of heavens could not contain him. And though Solomon doth not say it in so many words, yet he as good as intimates, that if so great a king as Solomon could not be worthy to build this house, what ought Hiram to think of himself, whose revenues and dominions were small and contemptible, compared to Solomon's? It is not said what effect this message had upon the mind of Hiram, as it concerned his own everlasting welfare. It wrought so far indeed with the king of Tyre, that he readily granted all he asked. This he might do from policy. But whether it went further, to the conversion of his soul to God, must be left undetermined by us. We may however thus far observe upon it, that when we have done all we can to hold up to others the glories, the loveliness, the beauties of Jesus, in order to win their affections to our beloved, if *their* hearts be not enamoured, *ours* will be the more refreshed with every renewed opportunity of speaking of his love.

11 ¶ Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the LORD hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them.

12 Hiram said moreover, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David the king a wise son, endued with prudence and understanding, that might build an house for the LORD, and an house for his kingdom.

13 And now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Hiram my father's,

14 The son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father *was* a man of Tyre, skilful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be put to him, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father.

15 Now therefore the wheat, and the barley, the oil, and the wine, which my lord hath spoken of, let him send unto his servants:

16 And we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in flotes by sea to Joppa; and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem.

Some have thought that Hiram was one of that class of people, who were Proselytes to the Jewish religion. There were some who were permitted to worship in the gates, or outer courts of Israel. But I do not think from his letter, in ascribing blessedness to Solomon's God for having set him on the throne of his father, that this is sufficient to draw the conclusion. This might be complimentary. However, whether he was, or was not, thus far a believer in the God of Israel, yet he was well affected to Solomon, in granting him his request. How many are there whom the Lord will make use of as instruments in building churches and chapels to his glory; but who feel no predilection to the person of Jesus himself. It is an awful thought! And to carry it further: how many have been led to put forth an helping hand for the promotion of others salvation, whose lives have given no proofs that they have been anxious for their own! A class of them our Lord himself describes, who are represented by him at the last day as saying; *Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* but of whom Jesus will disclaim all knowledge, as to any vital communion between himself and them! Reader! of all melancholy thoughts this is the greatest. That a man should preach Jesus: should be commissioned by that preaching, (or prophesying, as it is called) to be an instrument to a sinner's conversion, in leading him from the power of the enemy! What work can be more wonderful! and yet he himself made no partaker of the grace; but simply, like a water pipe, to convey to others, and never refreshed, nor desiring refreshment himself! Matt. vii. 22. The curious workman which Hiram sent to Solomon, of whose genealogy the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to give some account, deserves a little notice. He was by the mother's side of the tribe of Dan it seems, and his father a Tyrian. I do not say so; but yet I think there is somewhat in it worth remarking, that in the building of this temple, the master workman should have sprung both from Jew and Gentile. Was it thy pleasure, dearest Jesus, as this temple was thy type, that thou wouldest have it constructed by one that belonged to both thy families? Didst thou really, blessed Lord, mean thereby to give thy poor Gentile church a sweet thought, that as we know thine heart, and thy love towards us poor Gentiles was from everlasting, thou wouldest in this instance, however trifling it may seem to some, yet manifest to others that thou hast loved us with an everlasting love! Methinks I hear thee say, and from this mark shewing it also, *I know the thoughts that I think toward you saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.* Precious Jesus! oh! that my thoughts were always on thee, as thy thoughts have been towards thy people! Jerem. xxix. 11,

17 ¶ And Solomon numbered all the strangers that *were* in the land of Israel, after the numbering wherewith David his father had numbered them; and they were found an hundred and fifty thousand and three thousand and six hundred.

18 And he set threescore and ten thousand of them *to be* bearers of burdens, and fourscore thousand *to be* hewers in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred overseers to set the people a work.

We may in some measure, form some faint idea of the wonderful structure of Solomon's temple, which was finished in seven years, from the number of hands employed. But what is this to the grand thought of the temple of Jesus' body!—Here, again, we find the great multitude of labourers were strangers, that is Gentiles. John's view of the glories above was of the same kind. While he saw an hundred and forty and four thousand of Israel, he saw a multitude that no man could number, of the great varieties of the earth. Yes! blessed Jesus: *the Father hath given thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and to be his salvation to the ends of the earth.* Rev. vii. 4, 9. Isa. xlix. 6.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the view here given of Solomon's temple, the workmen, and the materials taken and gathered from afar, I would contemplate how Solomon, my God and King, hath gathered the workmen and materials for his Temple, from all the varieties of the earth. *When the Lord gave the word, great was the company of the preachers.* Thou hast called patriarchs, prophets, and apostles: thou hast taken thy workmen from among the lowest, even the outcasts of the world. And now, Lord, when called, and gathered, and collected, and brought to thy Jerusalem to form thy church below; founded on thyself, thou Chief Corner Stone, how are they like polished stones of the temple, closely joined in Jesus, and formed *for an habitation of God, through the Spirit.* Are they not the household of faith? Are they not as a spiritual house to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ! And when, by and by, thou shalt remove the whole building to constitute thy temple above, how will they all appear before thee in glory! Blessed Lord! give my soul to see in those outer things, the shadow of those good things which are yet to come. Make me, however low and humble the lot assigned may be, a builder in thine house. Cause me to rest wholly my salvation, and all my hopes upon that elect, precious Corner Stone, which God hath laid in Zion; that all my strength, faith, and gospel conversation may be *on Jesus, in Jesus, and of Jesus*: perfectly and unalterably convinced, that *other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* Here, Lord, would I rest, and here would I be found knowing that he that thus buildeth, and thus liveth, and thus dieth, *shall never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.*

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

The information in this Chapter, is in respect to the building of the temple. Here is an account of the spot, the time in which it was begun, the dimensions, extent, and ornaments of it.

THEN Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Though we have a more particular account in the 6th chapter of the 1st book of the Kings, (to which once for all I refer the Reader) of this temple, and the building of it by Solomon; yet, as the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to have it recorded again in this book of the Chronicles, it evidently implies the importance of the thing itself, and how highly it ought to be regarded. I should not think myself justified, therefore, in passing it hastily by. And first, Reader, consider the hallowed spot in Mount *Moriah*. A spot rendered for ever memorable, being the place the Lord pointed out to Abraham, for the offering of his son Isaac. And as this was evidently intended to shadow forth the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ; what spot could be more suited for the temple (which was also a type of Christ) to be erected upon? Mount Moriah was one of those several mounts around Jerusalem. Mount Calvary stood near it. And what is observable moreover is, that neither Abraham nor Solomon had any hand in the choice of the place. God himself appointed both. Jesus is of the Lord's own providing. Gen. xxii. 2. And, secondly, what rendered this place more memorable was, that it was in the place in which the Lord had answered by fire. 1 Chron. xxii. 18. 26.

2 And he began to build in the second *day* of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign.

It was thought an object of moment, to mark down the time also when this great work was begun. Believers in Jesus love to dwell particularly on the first temple-work building of grace in their souls. Some can trace these things more fully than others. Some, like the blind man whose eyes the Lord had opened, can hardly tell the time, or method by which the Lord began the work in their hearts. But it is a blessed thing when a poor sinner can say, *One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.* Reader! would you know this for yourself, whether the temple-work building is begun in your heart? Ask yourself this question; Have you seen Jesus in his glory and suitableness to you as a poor sinner? When Jesus is truly seen, truly known, and truly felt, the day of conversion is arrived, the day of Jubilee is come. The God of the Hebrews hath met with us. Like Jacob, it may be said, *He found him in Bethel; and there he spake with us.* Hosea xii. 4.

3 ¶ Now these are the things wherein Solomon

was instructed for the building of the house of God. The length by cubits after the first measure *was* threescore cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits.

4 ¶ And the porch that *was* in the front of the house, the length of it *was* according to the breadth of the house twenty cubits, and the height *was* an hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure gold.

5 And the greater house he ceiled with fir tree, which he overlaid with fine gold, and set thereon palm trees and chains.

6 And he garnished the house with precious stones for beauty: and the gold *was* gold of Parvaim.

7 He overlaid also the house, the beams, the posts, and the walls thereof, and the doors thereof, with gold; and graved cherubims on the walls.

8 And he made the most holy house, the length whereof *was* according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold, *amounting* to six hundred talents.

9 And the weight of the nails *was* fifty shekels of gold. And he overlaid the upper chambers with gold.

I have no doubt but that some interesting things are included in the dimensions, extent, and ornament. But all that we can speak of these things is, that as they were all belonging to a temple that was a type of Jesus, they were all suitably costly. Perhaps they represented the graces of his Person, and the gifts of his Spirit. But what ornaments of gold, or silver, or precious stones, are competent to resemble those!

10 And in the most holy house he made two cherubins of image work, and overlaid them with gold.

11 ¶ And the wings of the cherubims *were* twenty cubits long: one wing of the one cherub *was*

five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house: and the other wing *was likewise* five cubits, reaching to the wing of the other cherub.

12 And *one* wing of the other cherub *was* five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house: and the other wing *was* five cubits *also*, joining to the wing of the other cherub.

13 The wings of these cherubims spread themselves forth twenty cubits: and they stood on their feet, and their faces *were* inward.

14 And he made the vail *of* blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon.

15 Also he made before the house two pillars of thirty and five cubits high, and the chapter that *was* on the top of each of them *was* five cubits.

16 And he made chains, *as* in the oracle, and put *them* on the heads of the pillars; and made an hundred pomegranates, and put *them* on the chains.

17 And he reared up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand, and the other on the left; and called the name of that on the right hand Jachin, and the name of that on the left Boaz.

As to the most holy, and the vail of the temple, we, who live under gospel times, can have a clearer apprehension of their significance, since the Son of God hath come, and opened a new and living way for us through the vail, and hath entered into the most holy place, even into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. Jesus is the true Temple, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Until he came and opened this way by his blood, there could be no approach to God. The vail formed a total separation. It was formed not only for separation, but for concealment: for none but the high priest, and he only once in a year, and that not without blood, could venture within it. And this evidently pointed out the darkness of the dispensation until the gospel. And what was this separation, but an intimation, that by the breach of the law man was separated from God; that God's perfections were injured, and that our unholy nature would for ever have kept up this distance, had not Jesus interposed. By the obedience and death of the Lord Jesus, the law was satisfied; the justice of God appeased, and the sin which separated between God and us,

done away by the blood of Jesus, which cleanseth the sinner, and by the righteousness of Jesus, which justifieth the sinner. So that now a new and living way is opened by his blood, and poor sinners are authorized, nay, even commanded to *draw nigh with true hearts in full assurance of faith.* Heb. x. 19, 20, &c.

REFLECTIONS.

How is it possible, dearest Jesus, to behold the account of this temple; to behold the hallowed spot on which it was built; to mark the dimensions; to observe the most holy place, and the vail, which at thy crucifixion was rent in twain, as a token that all separation between God and his people was for ever done away; without having our very souls led out to thee, and to mark all the lovely features of thy Person and work, thus shadowed forth in the antient building of Solomon's temple? Do I behold thee, thou dearest Lord, in substance of our flesh, entering into the temple! Do I see thee going on to Mount Calvary for a sacrifice! Do I hear thee say, *Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days!* Do I behold the vail of the temple rent at thy death; and shall I not in all these, see that every thing in Solomon's temple was intended to typify, and represent thy Person, and offices, and relations, and characters! Yes! blessed Jesus, this, with all its superb furniture and ornaments, was but the shadow; it is thou that art the substance, and in thee most plainly is set forth the whole to which these things ministered. Condescend, Holy Saviour! to bring my soul from the ministry of these things, to be more and more acquainted with thee. And as the mind of Jehovah was thus occupied in directing the structure of an earthly house, to represent thy glory, oh! that thou wouldest lead forth my soul to the beholding in it, what sets forth the heavenly temple of thy body. Lord grant that I may be growing up to thee in all things. Be thou my God, my holy one, the foundation, the top stone, the all in all, of the spiritual building, that I may be found in thee, and united to thee for ever.

CHAP. IV.

CONTENTS.

This chapter is but a continuation of the former. The subject is prosecuted concerning the work and materials of the temple; and here is described, the altar of brass, the molten sea, the lavers, candlesticks, and tables, together with the instruments of gold.

MOREOVER he made an altar of brass, twenty cubits the length thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the height thereof.

This altar of brass received the gifts and offerings of the people. How lovely a representation of Jesus, in whose hands, as mediator, all the offerings of his people must be placed. *None cometh to the Father but by him.* Moreover the largeness of it represents the largeness of the heart of Jesus. There is room enough in our Jesus for all his peo

ple. Add to this, the height of it pointed to the loftiness of our Great Saviour, who is both the sacrifice, and the sacrificer, and the altar, on whom all sacrifices were offered. And from this elevation of ten cubits high, every Israelite from the courts around might see the sacrifice, and behold the flame ascend before God. Oh! how very precious to see, with the eye of faith, the Lord Jesus going in before the mercy-seat with the offerings of his people.

And Reader! do you not believe that the faithful Israelites then understood all this with a reference to Jesus, and eyed the Lord Jesus in all as the great propitiation? Surely, if the earlier patriarchs offered all their sacrifices by faith in this great atonement, as we are assured they did, in those later ages, when Christ had been more fully and more openly preached in type and figure, we cannot but suppose, that the Holy Ghost had brought the minds of the people, more savingly acquainted with the substance to which the whole shadow ministered. Heb. ix. 4, 17, 28.

2 ¶ Also he made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about.

3 And under it *was* the similitude of oxen, which did compass it round about: ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about. Two rows of oxen *were* cast, when it was cast.

4 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.

5 And the thickness of it *was* an handbreadth, and the brim of it like the work of the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; *and* it received and held three thousand baths.

Can any thing be more similar, in figure and type, than this molten sea to the fountain opened in gospel-times for sin and for uncleanness? And observe the vast size of it, to denote the infinite fulness that there is in Jesus. Oh! for faith to wash and be clean in the blood of the Lamb! John i. 29.

6 ¶ He made also ten lavers, and put five on the right hand, and five on the left, to wash in them: such things as they offered for the burnt

offering they washed in them; but the sea *was* for the priests to wash in.

Observe, how all must be particular and express in pointing to gospel mercies. All must be washed, both priests, people, and sacrifices: for nothing but the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. 1 John i. 7.

7 And he made ten candlesticks of gold according to their form, and set *them* in the temple, five on the right hand, and five on the left.

8 He made also ten tables, and placed *them* in the temple, five on the right side, and five on the left. And he made an hundred basons of gold.

9 Furthermore he made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court, and overlaid the doors of them with brass.

10 And he set the sea on the right side of the east end, over against the south.

11 And Hiram made the pots, and the shovels, and the basons. And Hiram finished the work that he was to make for king Solomon for the house of God;

12 *To wit*, the two pillars, and the pommels, and the chapiters *which were* on the top of the two pillars, and the two wreaths to cover the two pommels of the chapiters *which were* on the pillars;

13 And four hundred pomegranates on the two wreaths; two rows of pomegranates on each wreath, to cover the two pommels of the chapiters *which were* upon the pillars.

14 He made also bases, and lavers made he upon the bases;

15 One sea, and twelve oxen under it.

16 The pots also, and the shovels, and the flesh-hooks, and all their instruments, did Hiram his father make to king Solomon for the house of the LORD of bright brass.

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

18 Thus Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance: for the weight of the brass could not be found out.

19 ¶ And Solomon made all the vessels that *were for* the house of God, the golden altar also, and the tables whereon the shew bread *was set*;

20 Moreover the candlesticks with their lamps, that they should burn after the manner before the oracle, of pure gold;

21 And the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, *made he of gold, and that perfect gold*;

22 And the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and the censers, *of pure gold*: and the entry of the house, the inner doors thereof for the most holy *place*, and the doors of the house of the temple, *were of gold*.

I include all these under one view; for of the whole it may be said, as the apostle hath before remarked, concerning the tabernacle in the wilderness, *of those we cannot now speak particularly*. But of this we may be sure, the Holy Ghost graciously signified, that by the whole, and from the use of all of them, the grand lesson taught was, that the way into the holiest of all, was not yet made manifest, until Christ being come, an high priest of good things to come. Precious Jesus! who shall properly and fully estimate the preciousness of thy salvation shadowed forth through so many ages, and all compleated by thine own perfect righteousness, and by that *one offering of thyself once offered, whereby thou hast for ever perfected them that are sanctified*. Heb. x. 14.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us not dismiss this chapter, however short and imperfect our researches can go, in the discovery of spiritual blessings veiled under temporal ministrations, without first looking at the several things here consecrated to the service of the temple, with an eye to better things to come, and in reference to Jesus, and his church, and ministry. Was not the golden altar a beautiful emblem of the divinity of the Lord Jesus? It is the altar, we are told, which sanctifieth the gift: and surely it was the Deity of Jesus which gave dignity and efficacy to his complete redemption. Surely the altar represented Jesus in his person, blood, and sacrifice, as the incense ascending from it, became a lively emblem of the efficacy of his all-prevailing intercession; neither can we be at a loss to understand to what purpose the tables in the temple ministered, when we now behold the table of the Lord, with the standing ordinance of his holy supper, constantly presented to our view, as a memorial of his death, to be observed for ever in his church. And the molten sea,

with all the washings both of priests and people, as sweetly set forth the ordinance of baptism in the church of Jesus, which forms an entrance into the pale of the covenant by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on the Lord's people abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Hail! thou all-blessed, all-precious Emmanuel! thou art the one great ordinance of heaven! in thee and thy finished work of salvation we behold all the services, ordinances, sacrifices, and temple-worship of the old church dispensation centre. In thee, dearest Lord, they all had their accomplishment. They were the shadow of good things to come: and thou art the substance. To thee they all point. By thee their efficacy is for ever done away. And in thee their services are rendered no longer necessary. Thou art the end of all for righteousness to every one that believeth; and in thy compleat redemption-work we behold our souls justified before God. Everlasting praises be unto thee; O Lord, for all thou hast wrought and accomplished by thy blood!

CHAP. V.

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The temple being finished, the vessels and dedicated treasures are brought into the temple, and the Lord giveth a token of his favour and acceptance.

THUS all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished; and Solomon brought in *all* the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God.

I refer the Reader for the observations on this subject to the parallel account given of it, 1 Kings viii. 2. How delightful is it to see Solomon bringing in his treasures into the Lord's house. But, Reader! how much more lovely to behold Jesus bringing in his treasures, even his redeemed, into the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?

2 ¶ 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 Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion.

3 Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king in the feast which *was* in the seventh month.

This assembly beautifully illustrates how all Israel is concerned in what concerned the ark. And how more beautiful still to consider, how

all the redeemed of the Lord are concerned in what belongs to Jesus, whom that ark typified. Here let all be convened—our little ones, and even they that suck the breast!

4 And all the elders of Israel came: and the Levites took up the ark.

5 And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that *were* in the tabernacle, these did the priests and the Levites bring up.

So would I take Jesus in the arms of my faith, and all that appertains to him, and, like holy Simeon, desire to *depart in peace, having seen his salvation*.

6 Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude.

Observe, Reader! how sacrifices made a part in every service: *without shedding of blood there is no remission*. Nothing but the blood of Christ cleanseth from sin.

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

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

Observe, how necessary the presence of Jesus must be to sanctify both place and service.

9 And they drew out the staves *of the ark*, that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without. And there it is unto this day.

That the ark was in the temple unto this day, means somewhat more than the mere literal sense. Most probably Ezra wrote this book of the Chronicles; at which time Solomon's temple was destroyed. I rather think Ezra had a spiritual meaning in the expression; and that the phrase is intended to say, that the ark, that is, the presence of the Lord, is with Israel to this day. How delightful to consider, Jesus is *with his people always, even unto the end of the world!*

10 *There was* nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put *therein* at Horeb, when the

LORD made *a covenant* with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.

When John, the beloved apostle, in a vision, saw the temple of God opened in heaven, he saw the ark of his testament: meaning, perhaps, the everlasting perpetuity and duration of the covenant of redemption in the blood of Jesus, whom that ark prefigured. Rev. xi. 19.

11 ¶ And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy *place*: (for all the priests *that were* present were sanctified, *and* did not *then* wait by course:

12 Also the Levites *which were* the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, *being* arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:)

13 It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers *were* as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up *their* voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, *saying*, For *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever: that *then* the house was filled with a cloud, *even* the house of the LORD;

14 So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.

What sublimity is there in this account, short as it is. The Lord's approbation of this temple is the most interesting part; in filling the house with a cloud. The Reader will not, I hope, overlook that the approbation of Jesus was by a voice coming out of the cloud, saying, *This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.* Matt. xvii. 5. Observe, moreover, that all the manifestations before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ were through the medium of clouds and ordinances. But when the Son of God came, the dark dispensation was done away: *We all beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.* And do remark yet further, that as the priests could not stand to minister before the Lord, by reason of the glory, though in a cloud, nothing could more decidedly preach, that until Jesus came, there could be no approach, no drawing nigh to the Lord Jehovah. But now we have access and redemption through his blood, we may approach with holy

confidence in him and through him to a mercy-seat, and *find mercy and grace to help in every time of need.* Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.

REFLECTIONS.

LORD! as I look on, and behold the riches and stores bringing into thy temple, what have I to offer or bring to the service of my God? Blessed Jesus! give me grace, like that poor widow, whose offering thou didst regard, to bring my two mites, even my soul and body, for all I have, and all I am, and ever shall be, is from thee, Lord, and of thy bounty, and of thine own would I give thee.

But oh, precious Jesus! did the Levites take up the ark unto its place, and did the whole nation of Israel celebrate the festivity with sacrifices, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude: and shall I not prize that one all-sufficient, all-glorious, and all-effectual sacrifice, to which they ministered, which is thyself, in all the fulness of thy love and redemption!

I bless thee, thou great High Priest of a better dispensation, established upon better promises; that now no cloud can intercept the view of thee, when, in the glory of Jehovah, thou hast filled the house of our God. We can and do behold thee, by faith, in thy word, in thine ordinances, in thy visits of grace to our hearts. And we can and do behold thee, by faith, when we see thee entered into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us, having obtained eternal redemption by thy blood. Hail! holy blessed Lord Jesus! be thou our hope, our joy, our salvation here below, as thou art, and wilt be, our portion for evermore.

CHAP VI.

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This chapter is so closely connected with the former, that it may be considered but as a continuation of the same subject. The cloud which filled the house, as an intimation of the divine presence, gives occasion to Solomon to bless God for this grace manifested.

THEN said Solomon, The LORD hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.

2 But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever.

In the opening of this chapter, I beg to refer the Reader to the history, as we have it almost literally the same, 1 Kings viii. Reader! what a blessed dispensation are we brought under! Jesus sweetly visits his people, and manifests his presence, not in clouds and darkness, but under the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit. Oh! what a blessed thought! our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. *He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you,* saith our precious Lord Jesus. 1 Cor. vi. 19. John xiv. 17.

3 And the king turned his face, and blessed the

whole congregation of Israel: and all the congregation of Israel stood.

4 And he said, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled *that* which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying,

5 Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build an house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be a ruler over my people Israel:

6 But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel.

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

8 But the LORD said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart:

9 Notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name.

10 The LORD therefore hath performed his word that he hath spoken: for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

11 And in it have I put the ark, wherein *is* the covenant of the LORD, that he made with the children of Israel.

Observe, Solomon first turns to the people, as if by an enumeration of the divine mercies he aimed to raise their souls into an holy flame of devotion, before that he fell upon his knees to present himself and the people before God. Do we not feel our minds irresistibly led to contemplate the Lord Jesus in this? How doth our glorious High Priest and king go in and out before his people, in all the ordinances of worship? And how doth he, by the sweet influences of his grace, raise up our souls to the love of the Father himself and blessed Spirit, in the re-

membrance of the great things in redemption-work which he hath wrought for us! here, indeed, in the true sense of the word, the Lord Jehovah hath fulfilled all his gracious purposes; for in the person of Jesus the promise is accomplished. *I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways. He shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price, or reward, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Isaiah xlv. 13.

12 ¶ And he stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands:

13 For Solomon had made a brasen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven,

Those verses throw a light upon the parallel passage in the book of the Kings. While Solomon addressed the people he stood before the altar. But when he came to address the Lord he fell upon his knees.

14 And said, O LORD God of Israel, *there is* no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and *shewest* mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their hearts:

15 Thou which hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled *it* with thine hand, as *it is* this day.

16 Now therefore, O LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way to walk in my law, as thou hast walked before me.

17 Now then, O LORD God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David.

18 But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of

heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!

19 Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee:

20 That thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth toward this place.

21 Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling place, *even* from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive.

22 If a man sin against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to make him swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house;

23 Then hear thou from heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, by requiting the wicked, by recompensing his way upon his own head; and by justifying the righteous, by giving him according to his righteousness.

24 And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee; and shall return and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication before thee in this house;

25 Then hear thou from the heavens, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to them and to their fathers.

26 When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; *yet* if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them;

27 Then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way, wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land, which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance.

28 If there be dearth in the land, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting, or mildew, locusts, or caterpillars; if their enemies besiege them in the cities of their land, whatsoever sore or whatsoever sickness *there be*:

29 *Then* what prayer *or* what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house:

30 Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men:)

31 That they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways, so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.

32 Moreover concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched out arm; if they come and pray in this house;

33 Then hear thou from the heavens, *even* from 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, and fear thee, as *doth* thy people Israel, and may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name.

34 If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which

thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name;

35 Then hear thou from the heavens their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

36 If they sin against thee, (for *there is* no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before *their* enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near;

37 Yet *if* they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly:

38 If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and *toward* the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name:

39 Then hear thou from the heavens, *even* from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.

40 Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and *let* thine ears *be* attent unto the prayer *that is made* in this place.

41 Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness.

42 O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant.

I refer the Reader to the observations made on this prayer already in the Commentary on the 1 Kings viii. And only by way of enforcing

what was there said, I would beseech the Reader, as he goeth over every part of it, to keep an eye stedfastly fixed on our glorious Solomon, whom the king of Israel here personated as his type. It is Jesus alone who is the intercessor, the High Priest, the advocate of his people. By virtue of his blood and righteousness the divine favour can alone be obtained. And therefore, in all the supposable cases here enumerated, of error, infirmity, transgression, and sin; oh! what a resource is it, that the eye of Jehovah is eternally fixed on the Lord Jesus whom this temple typified. Reader! while our souls follow the spirit of Solomon's prayer, that the Lord God of Israel would own his house, would hear and accept prayers; would remember his covenant engagements, would compassionate the frailties of his people, and, even when in an enemy's land, if their eye and their heart should be directed in supplication towards this house as the house of the Lord, that then mercy might be shewn them; shall we not discover what pure gospel runs through every part of it, and that the whole sum and substance of it is Jesus? Oh Lord God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, well may we in the contemplation of thy rich salvation in Jesus take up the language of Solomon and say, *Arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place: thou and the ark (the Jesus) of thy strength.* Blessed be the Lord our God who in him hath confirmed to us all the sure mercies of David. Isaiah lv. 3.

REFLECTIONS.

OH! most gracious, most holy, most blessed Lord God Almighty! what expressions of thankfulness can be found sufficient to speak thy love in the unequalled gift of thy dear Son! Was it not enough, O thou Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, that from thine own free grace thou didst set up thy dear Son from everlasting, as the constituted head of thy church and people; but through so many ages intermediate to his coming thou shouldst be pleased to keep up, by so many ways, and in such various representations, tokens, and symbols, and types to shadow forth the glories of his person, and the vast importance of his salvation? Oh! Lord! I would not only beseech thee, like Solomon, to bless me in all the circumstances in which I may be placed, and to pardon me in all the transgressions into which I may fall, for Jesus's sake; but I would pray also, Holy Father, that thou wouldest give me grace to appreciate and esteem this inestimable gift of thy dear Son in a manner suited to the vast importance with which thou hast been pleased to give him. I see, Lord, that thine infinite mind hath been occupied in this grand concern, as it relates to the salvation of poor sinners, from everlasting. Thou hast called upon the world to behold him whom thy soul loveth. Thou hast manifested such a display of love and grace in this solemn transaction of redeeming thy church by the Lord Jesus, as challengeth the whole earth to contemplate the person of Jesus whom the Father so loveth. Now, Lord, hear me for one sweet mercy which in its bosom includes every other; cause me so to love the Lord Jesus as thou lovest him. Let Jesus be precious to my soul as he is to my God and Father. And while I pray thee to look upon the face of thine anointed, and accept my soul in him; oh! for grace in mine own soul to look unto Jesus with that fixedness of rapture and joy, until my whole heart be found going out after him in such earnestness of desire as can be satisfied with no-

thing beside. Hear me, Lord and Father, for this mercy! I am encouraged to ask it in faith, because Jesus himself encourageth me so to do. For he hath said, *In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you. Ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full.* Thus my joy will be full when my soul is full of Jesus! let this be the very language of my heart, *Whom have I in heaven but thee; and who is there upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee? My flesh and my heart faileth, but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

CHAP. VII.

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We have here the account of the Lord's gracious answer to Solomon's prayer. The effect it had upon the people. Beside these things, here is related the circumstance of the Lord's visit to Solomon by night.

NOW when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.

It is remarkable, that this gracious manifestation of God's acceptance in the fire descending and consuming the sacrifice is not noticed in the parallel passage in the book of the Kings. We therefore may find cause from it to bless the Holy Ghost for this duplicate of the history in this book of the Chronicles, by which the Reader is desired to take notice that this part of the word of God is not, as some have injudiciously thought, a superfluous repetition of the sacred history. If there was but this one thing contained in all the Chronicles which had not been brought before the church in the former account, this alone would be enough to prove its value. The fire coming down from heaven, and consuming the sacrifice, was the gracious method the Lord was pleased to adopt by way of testifying his divine approbation: We have several examples before this of Solomon's sacrifice upon record. If the Reader wishes to compare scripture on this point, I refer him to the case of Aaron in his offering of the sin-offering, Levit. ix. 24: the memorable case of Gideon, Judges vi. 21: and Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 38. But Reader! when you have turned to these and other instances which may be found in scripture, do not overlook the vast and infinite concern we have in this doctrine as it refers to the Lord Jesus. When the Son of God, for the purpose of redemption, took upon him our nature, and became a sacrifice for our sins; the fire of God's wrath was manifested in the sufferings of Jesus. And what an approbation was given to this redemption by Jesus, when the voice from heaven publicly proclaimed: *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!* Precious Jesus! how lovely and gracious dost thou appear in all thy redemption-work for the souls of thy people.

2 And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house,

3 And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, *saying*, For *he is good*; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

God is awful even in his mercies. The fire which consumed the sacrifice, had it consumed them would have been their just desert: And in that it consumed the offering, it implied as much. The fire of God's wrath burns against sin: That sin transferred to the sacrifice, there it breaks forth. Oh! precious, precious Jesus! what love was thine to take my sins, and to sustain the fire of thy Father's wrath, that I might escape, and thou endure. Oh! for grace to love thee as thou hast loved me!

4 ¶ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD.

5 And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.

6 And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy *endureth* for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood.

How grateful is praise from a poor sinner to the Lord, when the Lord had pardoned his sin, and received him into favor. It is really beautiful to behold the joy of Solomon and his people upon this occasion.

7 Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that *was* before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the brasen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, and the meat offerings, and the fat.

8 Also at the same time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great

congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt.

9 And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days.

10 And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the LORD had shewed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people.

11 Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the LORD, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.

While the Lord was so gracious, the king will go on to seek blessings. Not only the temple, but the court, shall be hallowed. Lord, I would desire grace that every thing may be sweetly sanctified by Jesus, and in Jesus. When I am most happy in ordinary things, let my soul be very jealous over its affections, that I may be sure my happiness is still *in* Jesus, and flowing *from* Jesus. The promise is, *men shall be blessed in him*. And how shall I look for any thing to be blessed out of Jesus? They who would seek any one comfort *without* Jesus, it is to be feared their joys upon other occasions are not *in* Jesus. Reader! mark this thought, and see whether it suits *your* estimate and standard of real happiness. The return of the people to their habitations after so rich a festival, may serve to teach us with what spiritual joy God's people should return from the house, or the table of Jesus, after the enjoyment of *a feast indeed of fat things, of marrow, and of wine on the lees well refined*. Oh! thou dear Redeemer! what a feast dost thou hold! and what holy joy ought the living upon thy body and blood to impart to thy hidden ones!

12 And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.

13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;

14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will

I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer *that is made* in this place.

16 For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever : and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

This gracious second visit of the Lord to Solomon is related, 1 Kings ix. In addition to what was there observed, I only beg the Reader to remark with me how the Lord delighteth in mercy. If we read the Lord's answer with an eye to Christ, how beautiful is the paraphrase. "If to prompt my people to call upon me I withhold their comforts : If the influence of my spirit be restrained, like heaven shut up ; or if I permit the enemy to distress them, like the locusts devouring the land ; yet under all these discouraging circumstances, if my people feel their souls humbled, and shall look with an eye of faith to my dear Son, mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend unto the supplication of my people, for I have placed salvation in Zion for Jesus my glory." Isaiah xlii. 13. Oh ! how sweet, how very sweet, are all the Old Testament mercies, when explained to our souls with an eye to the New Testament blessing in Jesus !

17 And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments ;

18 Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man *to be* ruler in Israel.

How gracious is this declaration to Solomon considered in his own personal character. I would have the Reader make a proper distinction between mercies which are general and those which are special, and in particular, God's promises to Israel as a nation were sweet ; but Solomon needed those promises as personal to himself. And here they are delivered. Reader ! remark those promises were concerning the kingdom of Israel. How far they referred to Solomon's personal and everlasting happiness is not said. They seem to refer to temporal blessings.

19 But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them ;

20 Then will I pluck them up by the roots out

of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it *to be* a proverb and a by word among all nations.

21 And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and unto this house?

22 And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.

The Lord here takes in the whole of the people as a nation. And when we compare the sequel of the history of Israel, as a people, to what is here said, nothing can be more plain than that God, foreseeing the apostacy and corruption of his people, held forth to them the sure consequence of sin and transgression.

REFLECTIONS.

How encouraging is it to see the gracious answers of God to the cries and supplications of his people. Surely, as the prophet said upon another occasion, the God that answereth by fire let him be God. But oh! how sure is it, that the Lord God that hath answered, and doth answer, by the acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus, he must be God. Yes! blessed Lord! thou hast heard, and thou hast answered, in the rich redemption of thy dear Son, and manifested that in him *shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

Lord! I would look up to thee that as my eye and my soul desires to be everlastingly fixed on Jesus, thou wouldest grant me all that is needful for me in all my straitenings and difficulties. And if the heavens are shut up, or if sickness, pestilence, or evil, have their commission to devour; yet, Lord, look, we beseech thee, unto Jesus, and accept poor sinners in him. Pardon and forgive thy poor creatures, and let the blood and righteousness of Jesus plead when sin most cries out against the iniquities of thy people. Consider, Lord, that they are thy people, the work of thine hands, and whom thou hast taken into covenant with thyself. *Be very gracious, Lord, for thy name's sake, and let not iniquity be our ruin. See, we beseech thee, we are all thy people?*

CHAP. VIII.

CONTENTS.

This chapter relates to us a further account of Solomon's buildings. Having built the temple and his own house, he here is represented as

building cities. The Gentiles are made tributaries. His yearly sacrifices.

AND it came to pass at the end of twenty years, wherein Solomon had built the house of the LORD, and his own house,

2 That the cities which Hiram had restored to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there.

3 And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it.

4 And he built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the store cities, which he built in Hamath.

5 Also he built Beth-horon the upper, and Beth-horon the nether, fenced cities, with walls, gates, and bars;

6 And Baalath, and all the store cities that Solomon had, and all the chariot cities, and the cities of the horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and throughout all the land of his dominion.

The view here given of Solomon is similar to what is related of him, 1 Kings ix. To one of Solomon's wisdom, one might have hoped to have heard more of his hours of meditation and prayer than of his building of cities! alas! what earthly affections are in our minds.

7 ¶ *As for* all the people *that were* left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which *were* not of Israel,

8 *But* of their children, who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not, them did Solomon make to pay tribute until this day.

9 But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work; but they *were* men of war, and chief of his captains, and captains of his chariots and horsemen.

10 And these *were* the chief of king Solomon's officers, *even* two hundred and fifty, that bare rule over the people.

The distinction Solomon made between his own people and the strangers, in exacting from the latter tribute, might, for ought I know, be politic as a prince. But blessed be our almighty Solomon, he makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile. The latter are fellow-heirs. And of such Jesus himself saith, *Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.* John x. 16.

11 And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because *the places are holy*, whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come.

There is a great outline of character given here of Solomon. In all his pursuits of pleasure he still retained a veneration for holy things.

12 ¶ Then Solomon offered burnt offerings unto the LORD on the altar of the LORD, which he had built before the porch.

13 Even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, *even* in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.

14 And he appointed, according to the order of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges, to praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required: the porters also by their courses at every gate: for so had David the man of God commanded.

15 And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures.

16 Now all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of the LORD, and until it was finished. So the house of the LORD was perfected.

The most interesting part to be noticed in these verses is what is said of the every-day offering. Never, from the first institution of sacrifices

was this omitted. The lamb of the morning, and the lamb of the evening. What a wonderful thought! that three o'clock in the afternoon which was the ninth hour in the Jews reckoning, should have been held so sacred for the evening sacrifice, because that was the hour which had been appointed before all worlds for the offering of the body of Jesus on the cross. The *ninth hour* Jesus cried, *It is finished*; and the whole of redemption was then completed. The Holy Ghost, we see, marked this hour in all the evening sacrifices with an eye to Jesus, from the beginning.

17 Then went Solomon to Ezion-geber, and to Eloth, at the sea side in the land of Edom.

18 And Hiram sent him by the hands of his servants ships, and servants that had knowledge of the sea; and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and took thence four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought *them* to king Solomon.

Solomon is represented under various characters. But though he went, it seems, in person to gather the gold of ophir, yet he himself hath left it upon record that *there is a merchandize that is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.* Prov. iii. 14. And what is that but the bartering with thee, thou blessed Jesus, our poverty for thy riches; our sins for thy righteousness; and our weakness for thy strength. Oh! for that *durable riches and righteousness* which is with thee, in which there is nothing hollow and unsubstantial; for thou causest them that love thee *to inherit substance, and thou fillest all their treasures.* Prov. viii. 18, 21.

REFLECTIONS.

WHILE I behold Solomon engaged in building houses, and going as a merchantman to gather riches; Lord, I would say, make me a wise master-builder, and the true merchantman that seeketh goodly pearls, even the *pearl of good price*.

Upon thee, thou blessed Jesus, as the chief corner-stone God the Father hath laid in Zion, would I build both for my present, and for my eternal habitation. And Lord, do thou instruct me so to build that when the winds, and storms, and rain shall descend, being founded upon thee the rock of ages, I shall never fall, but abide on thee, and in thee, for ever.

And as a goodly merchantman may I seek thee, the precious treasure hid in the field; needing not to go to *Ezion-geber*, and to *Eloth*, but may find thee at the entering in of the gates, and at the coming in of the doors. Yes! blessed Jesus, thou standest, and criest, and holdest forth thy riches, yea durable riches and righteousness, without money and without price. Oh! then, thou dearest Lord! teach my soul this precious merchandize, how a poor sinner may be eternally rich in receiving out of a full Saviour, whom the more he gives out, the more he hath to

bestow; and the more impoverished insolvent sinners he receives, the more glorious he himself becomes. Here, Lord, would I for once be truly covetous, and desire to make this the gainful business of all my life. For this would I rise early, late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, that Jesus, with all his fulness, God with all his promises, and the Holy Spirit with all his influences, I might bring home to my house, to my heart, to my soul; and live and feast upon them for ever and ever.

CHAP. IX.

CONTENTS.

This chapter, which closes the history of Solomon's reign, gives the most brilliant account of his greatness. His fame brings to his court the Queen of Sheba. Here is the relation of the interview between them; Solomon's riches; his death.

AND when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

2 And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not.

3 And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built,

4 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; and his cupbearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.

5 And she said to the king, *It was* a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom:

6 Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it*: and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: *for* thou exceedest the fame that I heard.

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

8 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, *to be* king for the LORD thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice.

9 And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices great abundance, and precious stones: neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon.

10 And the servants also of Hiram, and the servants of Solomon, which brought gold from Ophir, brought alnum trees and precious stones.

11 And the king made *of* the alnum trees terraces to the house of the LORD, and to the king's palace, and harps and psalteries for singers: and there were none such seen before in the land of Judah.

12 And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside *that* which she had brought unto the king. So she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her servants.

The account here given of the visit of the queen of Sheba is so exact with that given in the 1st book of the Kings, chap. x. that I think it needless to detain the Reader, but rather to refer him to that scripture, and the Commentary upon it. Oh! what a reproach is it now, and what an everlasting condemnation will it be in the world to come, to thousands, and tens of thousands, who so far from taking a long and wearisome journey, as this poor woman did, to hear the wisdom of Solomon, cannot be prevailed upon to hear and regard the wisdom of Solomon's Lord, though held forth in a preached gospel every sabbath-day.

Reader! do not overlook what was pointed at in the account of this woman's conduct, in the former relation of her history, how sweet an emblem she is of the coming sinner, in whose heart the Holy Ghost hath given information, and raised a desire of enquiry concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither let you and I overlook in the view here given of Solomon's condescension, the still greater grace and condescension of our Jesus, in discoursing with poor sinners, and eating with them. How astonished was the queen of the south in that the king of Israel

told her all that she desired. But how abundantly more is the sinner overwhelmed with astonishment, when the Lord Jesus opens to his view all that passed within, and removes all his fears, and anxieties, and gives him a confidence in Jesus which he apprehended he should never possess. Reader! what are your thoughts of our almighty Solomon concerning these things? Have you heard, as the queen of the South did, of the fame of our Solomon! are you come to prove him with hard questions! have you indeed been with Jesus! and hath he told you all that was in your heart! oh! then I need not tell you for you can better tell me, your astonishment. Surely you will conclude as she did, and yet infinitely higher will be your conclusion; the half of his greatness and wisdom hath never been told you. And of his love you could have had no conception. Go home then, Reader, as the queen did to her country, go home to thine house, spread abroad his fame, invite thousands and tens of thousands to come to him, and prove him themselves, that he is infinite in council and might. *Let the fathers to the children make known his praise.*

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

14 Beside *that which* chapmen and merchants brought. And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon.

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

16 And three hundred shields *made he of* beaten gold: three hundred *shekels* of gold went to one shield. And the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

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

18 And *there were* six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, *which were* fastened to the throne, and stays on each side of the sitting place, and two lions standing by the stays:

19 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.

20 And all the drinking vessels of king Solomon *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 *not* any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

21 For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, and ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

22 And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.

23 And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart.

24 And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.

25 And Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; whom he bestowed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

26 And he reigned over all the kings, from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt.

27 And the king made silver in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar trees made he as the sycamore trees that *are* in the low plains in abundance.

28 And they brought unto Solomon horses out of Egypt, and out of all lands.

What an astonishing relation is here given of the riches, and splendor, and power, and sovereignty of Solomon. Surely never was there a king among the sons of men of equal grandeur and magnificence. And yet what is all this compared to the durable riches and righteousness of Jesus? All that Solomon possessed, he tells us himself, was but vanity. But Jesus's gifts are solid, and not liable to decay. *I will cause those that love me (saith Jesus) to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.* Prov. viii. 21.

29 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, *are* they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the

Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer against Jeroboam the son of Nebat?

30 And Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years.

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

Pause, Reader! and in the account of the death of Solomon, learn to make a true estimate of human life. Alas! what can be the real intrinsic value and importance of all things here below, bounded as they are within the transitory existence of threescore and ten years, and those years liable to be cut short by numberless causes every moment! Oh! Lord, *teach me*, teach every Reader that gracious lesson, *so to number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Psm. xc. 12.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! it is truly interesting to behold the queen of the South coming from her own country, excited by the fame of Solomon to seek after his wisdom. But how much more truly interesting is it when we consider that the Holy Ghost herein beautifully represents the coming of the whole gentile church to the light of Jesus, and *kings to the brightness of his rising.*

It forms a subject in which every intelligent Reader cannot but feel pleased to behold the friendship between Solomon and the queen of Sheba, when he imparted to her of all her heart desired, and she presented to him the treasures of gold of ophir, and precious stones, and algum trees. But how infinitely higher in delight doth the subject arise in our view, when we behold in this a lively representation of Jesus our Solomon receiving the poor gentile church, and every individual sinner among his redeemed ones, with his poor offerings, and bartering his grace, and wisdom, and love, with all the riches of his redemption in the wonderful exchange!

And Reader! while we look at Solomon in all the splendor in which he is here described, and before we take our farewell of him, shall we not be led from the view of him as far as the shadow goes, to the contemplation of Jesus the substance, of whom in many instances he was a lively type. Our Christ, as well as Solomon after the flesh, was the son of David; and sure I am, that as the Lord sent by Nathan to have Solomon named Jedidiah, beloved of the Lord, a voice from heaven proclaimed our Jesus under this glorious character, the beloved and only begotten Son of God, in whom Jehovah was well pleased. And who can read the account of the wisdom of Solomon, as wiser than all the men of the east, without having their thoughts directed to the contemplation of that Solomon *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!* who can behold the extensiveness of Solomon's empire, of whom it is said that the Lord gave him a largeness of heart, even as the sand which is on the sea shore: without immediately being led to consider the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose dominion *is an everlasting dominion and whose*

power ruleth over all. Solomon was indeed the richest of all princes of the earth; for silver was as the stones of the street in Jerusalem. But what is this in comparison of the unsearchable riches of Christ! Solomon had a reign of peace during his life, and his subjects were happy under his government. But Jesus is himself, by way of emphasis called *the prince of peace*; for the sceptre of his kingdom is altogether *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* And if Solomon built by divine appointment the temple of the Lord, did not our Jesus himself become both the builder and the temple; for all his people are built on Jesus, the chief corner stone. He it is of whom alone it ever could be said, *He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory!* Hail! holy, glorious, gracious, blessed Jesus! a greater indeed than Solomon is here. Thou art higher and more excellent than the kings of any land. Thou art *the man whose name is the BRANCH,* Under thee and thy government we shall be safe. *All power is thine in heaven and in earth. Thy name shall endure for ever. Thy name shall be continued as long as the sun. Men shall be blessed in thee. All nations shall call thee blessed. Blessed be thy glorious name for ever; let the whole earth be filled with thy glory. Amen, and amen.*

CHAP. X.

CONTENTS.

We enter upon the history of Rehoboam in this chapter. He begins his reign with rejecting the counsel of the elders, and following youthful advice. Ten of the tribes of Israel revolt. He fleeth to Jerusalem.

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

We have this history almost word for word as it is here, 1 Kings xii. I therefore would refer the Reader to consult what is there said.

2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who *was* in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of Solomon the king, heard *it*, that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt.

3 And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came and spake to Rehoboam, saying,

4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee.

5 And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people departed.

6 And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye *me* to return answer to this people?

7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak goods word to them, they will be thy servants for ever.

8 But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him.

9 And he said unto them, What advice give ye that we may return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us?

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

11 For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you wth whips, but I *will chastise you* with scorpions.

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

13 And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men,

14 And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I *will chastise you* with scorpions.

15 So the king hearkened not unto the people: for the cause was of God, that the LORD might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

I have purposely gone through all these verses in one reading before that I offered any Commentary upon them in order to come to this last verse, which explains the whole; *the cause was of God*. It is of the highest importance in life, amidst all the concerns of it, the smallest, and apparently most inconsiderable, as well as the greatest, and those which carry consequence with them, that we never suffer our minds to lose sight of the Lord's hand. *He ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will*. Hence we find Rehoboam following the rash, ill-advised counsel of young men, and slighting the ripened judgment of years. And Reader! are there not a thousand Rehoboams in life who prefer the pursuit of things temporal to the grand and momentous concern of things which are eternal; who are wise, according to their judgment of things, for a moment, and foolish for eternity!

16 ¶ And when all Israel *saw* that the king would not hearken unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and *we have* none inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to your tents, O Israel: *and* now, David, see to thine own house. So all Israel went to their tents.

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

18 ¶ Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram that *was* over the tribute; and the children of Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. But king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to *his* chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

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

If we read this spiritually, and with an eye to Jesus, is not the language of every unawakened man similar to this, *We have none inheritance in the son of Jesse*. Alas! how was this fulfilled in the instance of the Jews at the crucifixion of Jesus! precious Lord Jesus! how did thy prayer bring down mercy to turn many of them from the error of their ways, when those among them who had been most clamorous, crying out, *Crucify, crucify him!* at the day of Pentecost, were pricked at the

heart, and then their language was, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Acts ii. 37.

REFLECTIONS.

IF in perusing the page of Rehoboam's folly we stand amazed to see the blindness and infatuation of such conduct; how much more may we be astonished at the folly and infatuation of sinners in rejecting the counsel of God against their own souls, and preferring the pleasures of sin for a season. *Oh! ye simple ones* (is the language of wisdom in the streets of the city) *how long will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge!* Surely the sinner that slights Jesus and his salvation is simple to the utmost possibility of simplicity. He hath no true knowledge to guide him. He prefers the hollow and empty husks of the world to durable riches and righteousness. The sinful pleasures of the earth are to him preferable to Jesus and his grace and glory. Could a man make a mock at sin, if he were not a fool? Could he sport with that which must end in ruin if he were not blind, and ignorant, and senseless, and stupid? Precious Jesus! thou that art wisdom itself. Oh! give us to see, to know, to appreciate rightly thy value, and to be thoroughly convinced of this, that *Happy is the man that findeth thee; for thy merchandize is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain of thee more than fine gold.*

CHAP. XI.

CONTENTS.

This chapter is the continuation of the history of Rehoboam. He raiseth an army to subdue Israel. Is forbidden to go to war by Shemaiah. An account of his wives and children.

AND when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam.

From small beginnings what large things follow! Rehoboam's preferring the counsel of young men to the old, laid the foundation of the revolt of the ten tribes of Israel from the house of David.

2 But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

3 Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah, and Benjamin, saying,

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

nor fight against your brethren : return every man to his house : for this thing is done of me. And they obeyed the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam.

We cannot but admire the conduct of Rehoboam in this obedience to the command of the Lord. Had he consulted the Lord at first, how much better would it have been.

5 And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defence in Judah.

6 He built even Beth-lehem, and Etam, and Tekoa,

7 And Beth-zur, and Shoco, and Adullam,

8 And Gath, and Mareshah, and Ziph,

9 And Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah,

10 And Zorah, and Aijalon, and Hebron, which *are* in Judah, and in Benjamin fenced cities.

11 And he fortified the strong holds, and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine.

12 And in every several city *he put* shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.

Those fenced cities were intended, no doubt, to act upon the defensive, after that he had received command from the Lord.

13 And the priests and the Levites that *were* in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts.

The encouragement given to the priests and Levites should seem to imply that Rehoboam regarded the service of the sanctuary.

14 For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem : for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD :

15 And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.

We have here introduced, in a parenthesis, a short but awful sketch of the infamous character of Jeroboam, which is spoken of in scripture in such dreadful terms of reproach.

16 And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers.

17 So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon.

18 ¶ And Rehoboam took him Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David to wife, *and* Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse;

19 Which bare him children; Jeush, and Shamariah, and Zerah.

20 And after her he took Maachah the daughter of Absalom; which bare him Abijah, and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith.

21 And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines: and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters.)

22 And Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, *to be ruler among his brethren*: for *he thought* to make him king.

23 And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city: and he gave them victual in abundance. And he desired many wives.

There is very little more to be gathered from the character of this prince than that he wisely preferred peace to war. Indeed the shelter he gave to the priests and Levites is much to his honour. No doubt his kingdom was preserved in peace and good order from the blessing of the Lord in answer to the prayers of his people. This was the real strength given to the kingdom of Judah.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT a poor trifling character is this Rehoboam? Is this the son of Solomon? Alas! what a poor resemblance of wisdom to the Fa-

ther. Reader! do remark that grace is not hereditary. As the father cannot bear the sins of the son, neither the son the sins of the father; so grace hath no connection in natural alliances.

Is not this Rehoboam a true picture of all carnal, slothful men! as he preferred the sluggish situation of the fleshly pursuits to those of promoting the glory of God, so we find all men under the reigning power of indwelling sin, desire only *to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*. Oh! what multitudes are there of Rehoboams in the land, who know nothing, think of nothing, enjoy nothing but fleshly lusts; whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things. Precious Jesus! keep thy people from such things. Oh! give to them to have their conversation more and more in heaven, and from thence to be always looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our vile bodies that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to his mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

CHAP. XII.

CONTENTS.

We have an awful sequel to the life of Rehoboam in this chapter. The lustful king forsaking God is left in the hand of the king of Egypt. His death.

AND it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.

The Reader would do well to consult the parallel history, 1 Kings xiv. From the entrance of Rehoboam on his government to the close of it, nothing can be more evident than that his heart was not right in the sight of God. Towards the close of his reign he gave more awful proofs of his corruption.

2 And it came to pass, *that* in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD.

3 With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people *were* without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkims, and the Ethiopians.

4 And he took the fenced cities which *pertained* to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.

How gracious is the Lord in raising up instruments of correction!

5 Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were ga-

thered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.

6 Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves: and they said, The LORD is righteous.

It is lovely always to see souls humbled under afflictions.

7 And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to She-maiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; *therefore* I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.

8 Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.

9 So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

10 Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed *them* to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house.

11 And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard chamber.

12 And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well.

13 ¶ So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam *was* one and forty years old when he began to reign,

and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name *was* Naamah an Ammonitess.

14 And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.

15 Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, *are* they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies? And *there were* wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.

16 And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

What a poor trifling, uninteresting character was this man! alas! what can make any character respectable but a life of piety and obedience towards God.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! what evidences do the whole earth afford of the reality of grace. We see men like Rehoboam, filling up a place in history, and the sum total of their lives is this, they lived, and eat, and drank, and then died. But is this the end of man's existence? Oh! for distinguishing grace to live all our days to the glory of God. To live *for* Jesus; and to live *to* Jesus. What can be sweeter than the precious testimony that *we have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* Lord! grant that this may be my portion. Let nothing call off my attention from thee, the one grand object of all desire. In thee, Lord, I shall possess all things. And if thou art mine, I shall be truly happy in time, and happy to all eternity.

CHAP XIII.

CONTENTS.

This chapter relates to us the history of Abijah, the son of Rehoboam. And here we have the melancholy account of the wars between Judah and Israel. This brings us to the close of Abijah's history.

NOW in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah.

2 He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Michaiah the daughter

of Uriel of Gibeah. And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.

The Reader will do well to consult the parallel history, 1 Kings xv. though it is more fully related here concerning the reign of Abijah than in that sacred record. But the subject is truly interesting; and the Reader will, I hope, not fail to regard it. The name of Abijah is striking; *Abba*, Father; *Jah*, Jehovah: meaning, the Lord is my Father.

3 And Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, *even* four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, *being* mighty men of valour.

4 And Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which *is* in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel;

5 Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, *even* to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?

His army was greatly inferior. But this he regards not. He pleads right, as descended from David; whereas Jeroboam is an usurper. The covenant of salt should *seem* to imply a covenant with sacrifice. For every sacrifice is salted with salt. David, with an eye to Christ, had so expressed himself, Psm. l. 5. It is precious to see so much of Jesus in the general circumstances of the people in those remote ages. By Abijah standing upon mount Ephraim, it is clear that he had penetrated pretty far into the heart of Jeroboam's dominions.

6 Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord.

7 And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tender-hearted, and could not withstand them.

8 And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David: and ye *be* a great multitude, and *there are* with

you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods.

9 Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of *other* lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, *the same* may be a priest of *them that are* no gods.

This speech of Abijah is very animated and powerful. He points out the iniquity of Jeroboam, who as a servant had stood up in open rebellion against his Lord. He bids the people take notice what vain, light, and trifling men were his supporters. He next adverts to the awful state in which he and his army stood, in respect to religion. He had thrown off the true religion of the God of Israel, and had set up calves for gods, and consecrated unhallowed men for his priests. As if he had said, Is it possible that any among you can conceive that such a cause can prosper?

10 But as for us, the LORD *is* our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests which minister unto the LORD, *are* the sons of Aaron, and the Levites *wait* upon *their* business.

11 And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also *set they in order* upon the pure table; and the candlesticks of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him.

12 And, behold, God himself *is* with us for *our* captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.

Abijah, having in the former part of his speech pointed out the badness of the cause of his enemies, in those verses calls upon the people to judge of the goodness of his cause from the Lord. He strongly represents that his priests are the descendants of Aaron, and dwells more particularly, (and I wish the Reader not to overlook this part of his address) on that distinguishing character of the true religion, the observance of the burnt sacrifice in the morning and evening of every day.

Reader! was not this evidently with an eye to Christ? Sweet thought! *If Jesus be for us who can be against us!*

13 ¶ But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment *was* behind them.

It should seem that while Abijah was addressing the armies Jeroboam artfully sent off a party to surround him.

14 And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle *was* before and behind: and they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets.

This is a beautiful testimony of piety; this cry unto the Lord.

15 Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

And this is as sweet a testimony of the Lord's hearing and answering prayer.—It was not Abijah's sword, not Abijah's speech, but it was the Lord that smote Jeroboam and Israel with him.

16 And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand.

17 And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men.

18 Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers.

19 And Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him, Beth-el with the towns thereof, and Jeshanath with the towns thereof, and Ephraim with the towns thereof.

The event was truly awful. This slaughter is the greatest that we ever read of in sacred history.

20 Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah: and the LORD struck him, and he died.

What a short but awful account doth the Holy Ghost give of this man! think only what a terror this wretch had been to multitudes. Like another Herod, the Lord smites him, and he dies. Oh! did but

such characters consider what feeble creatures they are in the midst of all their boasting, what a check might it give to the vanity of their mind! See Acts xii. 23.

21 But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters.

22 And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways, and his sayings, *are* written in the story of the prophet Iddo.

There appears to have been no grace in Abijah's heart; though the Lord was pleased to make him an instrument in his hand for the destruction of Jeroboam. Reader! is not this the case in the present hour?

REFLECTIONS.

It is hardly possible to read the history of war and bloodshed without having our minds led out to the serious consequences of sin, which hath introduced death with all its trains of evil. Behold, Reader, in the example before us, how the descendants of Jacob, in the different tribes and families, have lost sight of their original stock, and are employed in destroying one another. Oh! the wretched consequences of a fallen state! precious Jesus! here again, as in a thousand other instances, let me pause to praise thee for thy gracious interposition in the redemption of our fallen nature!

Lord! I beseech thee that in all the conflicts and warfares in which my soul may be engaged, give me to see, like *Abijah*, that the Lord is on my side, then need I not fear what men can do unto me. And oh, Lord! let my cause be on the same side as his was, with the house of David. Jesus is my lawful sovereign: by heirship; for the Father hath made him heir of all things; and by purchase and by conquest, for he hath purchased my redemption with his blood; and by the victory of his grace over my heart, he hath a rightful claim to my obedience and my love. Lord, grant that I may never be found lifting up the heel of disobedience against thee, lest like Jeroboam the Lord smite me, and I never after recover strength to lift up my head. But make me the willing subject of thy grace, that my knee may bow before thee, and with all the redeemed joyfully confess, that *Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*—Amen.

CHAP. XIV.

CONTENTS.

The succession of the history is carried on in this chapter in the relation of the reign of Asa, the son of Abijah. His character and piety, and an account of his victories.

SO Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son

reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years.

The history of a pious king amidst the relation of impious princes, is to the historian precious and refreshing, as some sweet spot of herbage and of water to the traveller amidst a barren and dry wilderness.

2 And Asa did *that which was* good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God:

3 For he took away the altars of the strange *gods*, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves:

4 And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment.

5 Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him.

6 And he built fenced cities in Judah; for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the LORD had given him rest.

7 Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about *them* walls, and towers, gates, and bars, *while* the land *is* yet before us; because we have sought the LORD our God, we have sought *him*, and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered.

It should seem from the account here given that Asa, immediately on his accession to the throne, began to reform the abuses of the preceding reign of his father. Idolatry he abolished, which had crept in from the latter end of the reign of his grandfather Solomon. And what is yet more pleasant in the account here given, he set up the pure worship of the Lord God of Israel. So that this forms a very pleasing relation concerning the kingdom of Judah under the government of Asa. If the Reader compares what is related of Asa in 1 Kings xv. with his history as recorded in this place and the two following chapters, the narratives will mutually explain each other. Though we have but a short account in the book of the Kings concerning Asa compared to what is here told of him.

8 And Asa had an army *of men* that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand; all these *were* mighty men of valour.

9 ¶ And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah.

10 Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.

The happiest and most exemplary life is not free from assault. Nay in a spiritual sense, if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall on this very account suffer persecution. That is a precious blessing of thine, dearest Jesus, only I would be always careful to see that it is purely from an attachment to thee, and to thy cause, that the persecution comes. Matt. v. 11.

11 And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is* nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou *art* our God; let not man prevail against thee.

Reader! do not fail to observe the beauties of this prayer, short as it is, for they are many. In the first place remark in it the ground of Asa's cry to God. He had served God in the day of his prosperity, and therefore now in the day of his adversity he might truly call upon him. Observe moreover, that the God he called upon was not an unknown God, but a well known and a well proved God; even God in covenant. O Lord, our God, said Asa! oh! how precious, how inconceivably precious is it, to have God in Christ in all the covenant engagements of redemption in the Lord Jesus, to fly to in time of need. Observe still further the strong faith Asa had in the power of God. It is nothing with thee (said he) to help with many or with few. Oh! for faith to every poor sinner when a sense of abounding transgression would overwhelm the soul! Thy covenant grace, almighty Father, and thy cleansing blood and justifying righteousness, thou blessed Jesus, can save from all sin! —Observe once more the humbleness of soul in Asa concerning his own strength; *we rest on thee*; not in our arms, nor in our strength. So saith the poor sinner made sensible of his own nothingness and depravity. His language is, I place no more dependence on my best prayers for acceptance, than on my worst sins. Neither repentance, nor faith, are the causes of my hope: But Jesus alone, his merits, his blood, his righteousness. And lastly, let not the Reader pass over as distinguishing a feature in Asa's prayer as any; thou art our God; let not man prevail against *thee*. Intimating that the cause was the Lord's, and so would be the glory of the triumph. And is not this the case in all the great objects of redemption? All is for the honour of Jesus, that God may be glorified in him. So sung the redeemed in heaven, which John

heard, who, while ascribing redemption to Jesus, proclaimed at the same time that this redemption was from God as the first cause, and reverted back to God again as the final end. *Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.* Rev. v. 9. See, Reader! what a true gospel prayer is here recorded of Asa in the book of the Chronicles.

12 So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled.

13 And Asa and the people that *were* with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his host; and they carried away very much spoil.

14 And they smote all the cities round about Gerar; for the fear of the LORD came upon them; and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them.

15 They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.

No wonder after such a prayer, which the Lord gave grace to offer up, that an answer of mercy and favor should come down. And Reader! pray remark one or two expressions in this account. It is said that the enemy could not recover themselves *before the Lord, and before his host.* And that *the fear of the Lord*, not the fear of Asa's army, came upon them. And such, depend upon it, is and will be the consternation and terror of all the enemies of our salvation. *The Lord thy God* (is the sweet promise) *shall drive them out before thee, and shall deliver them into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed.* See a precious string of promises to this amount; Deut. vii. from beginning to end. And which if the Reader spiritualizeth with an eye to Jesus (for it is pure gospel, and may be safely so interpreted) he will find it most precious indeed!

REFLECTIONS.

It is hardly possible to read the character here given of *Asa*, and the blessed eventual consequences of his piety, as it concerned the people of Judah, without having our minds led out in delightful contemplation on the happiness of a church, and nation, and people, under the blessings of princes which set up true religion in the land, and adorn the gospel of Jesus, not only by precept, but example. The imagination can hardly calculate the extensiveness of such a blessing, in the innumerable happy consequences which spring out of it. Who shall indeed say to what auspicious blessings, even in generations yet to come, it may reach,

And while we exercise the mind in contemplating the mercy as it is found in a land at large, under the eye of a reforming prince, like Asa; if we carry the thought into the narrower circle of churches and private families, the blessing is immense, even here, in the eventual gracious effects which must follow. Let the Reader figure to himself a church, an house, a family, all living in the faith, and love, and fear of God. They are closely allied in the strictest and most durable of all bonds, of reverence and faith in Jesus to a covenant God in Christ, and in real amity and Christian union to one another. Jesus is their glorious head, and they are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Let the enemies of their salvation, like the Æthiopians against Asa, come forth with an army of a thousand thousand, yet the battle is the Lord's, and he will eventually come forth to their deliverance. The graces of his Spirit will be their support, and confidence in the promises of redemption by Jesus their strong hold. They will be exercised indeed in resisting sin and Satan, but more is he that is with them than all that are against them. It is nothing to our God to help, whether with many or with few. They shall overcome, as the armies of heaven have done, by the blood of the Lamb, and be made more than conquerors through his grace helping them.

CHAP. XV.

CONTENTS.

The history of Asa is continued through this chapter. Encouraged by Azariah, on whom the Spirit of God descended to teach the king, he entereth further in the reformation of Judah from the remains of idolatry. He removeth his mother from being queen in consequence of her idolatry.

AND the Spirit of God came upon Asariah the son of Oded.

What a mercy it was that the Lord did not forsake his people in the midst of their idolatry, but poured out of his Holy Spirit occasionally upon the minds of some to preserve a sense of his presence among them. Sweet thought!

2 And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; the LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

3 Now for a long season Israel *hath been* without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

4 But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.

5 And in those times *there was* no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations *were* upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

6 And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity.

7 Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

It must have been an animating thing after the victory, and in the moment of returning from the spoils of the foe,—this address of Azariah. And observe how seasonable it was. Though the Lord had given them victory, had heard and answered prayer; and had destroyed the enemy; yet let not Asa and his people suppose that they might now return to folly. There is more cause than ever now to keep close to the Lord, that the mercy lately manifested might be perpetuated. Reader! mark what is here said with an eye to Jesus? Hath he lately helped us in our conflicts with the enemy? Hath he given us to see our nothingness, and his all-sufficiency? Let these things become only a more earnest call upon our hearts to see our daily need of him, and that we may act more faith upon him. Let his glory be our chief aim: and this will ensure us his abiding favor.

8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that *was* before the porch of the LORD.

How delightful it is to see the gracious effects of the prophet's preaching on the heart of Asa. Such, Reader! ought all the gracious messages of our God, in his blessed gospel, to have upon our hearts, to give us courage and strength for the holy war, and to animate our souls more and more to *forget things which are behind, and to press forward to those which are before; and thus to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Philip. iii. 13, 14.

9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God *was* with him.

10 So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

11 And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil *which* they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.

12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul:

13 That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death whether small or great, whether man or woman.

14 And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.

15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about.

This convening of the people was a very proper thing after so glorious an instance of the divine mercy; in order that all the people, because all were interested in the deliverance, might send up their praises together. And it is delightful to remark, that the assembly became numerous, and fell to Asa out of all Israel in abundance, because they saw that the Lord his God was with him. Oh! Reader! what unknown powers of persuasion would be found in that argument, could we but carry that proof with us, that the Lord our God is with us. Such we are told will be the grand predisposing cause, in making up the gospel church at the last times, when Jew, and Gentile, are to be brought into one fold. *Ten men shall take hold of the skirts saying; we will go with you for we have heard that God is with you.* Zech. viii. 23. How beautiful a view is here given of the sacred joy of this people. And what a complacency is described in the Lord's being found of them, and giving them rest! surely those sacrifices, and this covenant, were by faith in the promised seed and looking unto Jesus!

16 ¶ And also *concerning* Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from *being* queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped *it*, and burnt *it* at the brook Kidron.

17 But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.

18 And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels.

19 And there was no *more* war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

I admire Asa's integrity, in that his eye would not spare even his own mother. Surely there can be no real love to the Lord, that suffers any creature to become a rival. *He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me.* Precious Jesus! give me grace to follow thee wholly, though the ties of nature plead ever so powerfully. Thou who hast made me, redeemed me, and given me all my comforts; surely thou hast an unquestionable right to be loved, and closely adhered to above all.

REFLECTIONS.

How beautiful upon the mountains (saith the prophet) are the feet of them that publish salvation. And a lively token of divine favor, in the person of Azariah, was given here in this embassy from God to his people. And was not the purport of his visit to the same effect? Did he not hold forth the presence, the favor, the love, the assurance of protection to the people, while adhering to their covenant engagements? And what were these things but shadows and types of Jesus?

And what is it now? Ambassadors are sent by the Lord Jesus to propose and negotiate with poor sinful men, an embassy of mercy, favor, and peace. On Jesus, our fulness, our security, our very being and safety depend. And if, while these glorious tidings of God's good-will to men are held forth to us like Asa and the people, our very souls go forth in praise, and love with thanksgiving, for the unspeakable gift of God in his dear Son: oh! how certain is it, that the Lord will give us rest on every side from all our enemies. The Lord will fight our battles for us, and we shall hold our peace. *When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.*

CHAP. XVI.

CONTENTS.

This chapter closeth the history of Asa. After a long reign, and long prosperity, in consequence of new troubles arising, Asa sends to the king of Syria for aid. Being reproved for it by the prophet, Asa manifests great displeasure. He is diseased; seeks not to God, but to the physicians, for help. He dies, and is buried with great pomp.

IN the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

2 Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,

3 *There is* a league between me and thee, as *there was* between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

Here is a melancholy account of Asa after such an illustrious relation as we have had of him before. Is it possible that the man who had been so highly favoured of the Lord; had entered into covenant with God; and enjoyed the sweets of it for so many years, should be alarmed at the approach of a power like that of Syria? We have the account of this transaction, 1 Kings xv. There is, however, some difference, in the chronology of the account, between what is here related and in the book of the Kings; to which I refer the Reader. His alliance with *Benhadad*, an heathen, is singular in a man of Asa's piety. Alas! what a proneness there is in our corrupt nature, to keep fair with the carnal and ungodly world. But Reader! depend upon it, every backsliding of this kind shall bring its own scourge.

4 And Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali.

5 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard *it*, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease.

6 Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

The Syrian gladly availed himself to punish Israel. Herod and Pilate shall be good friends when joining against Jesus. But were it not for this, they would be sworn foes.

7 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.

8 Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.

9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

What a precious thing it is in all masters, could they but be truly sensible of it, to have faithful servants. In the church of God how highly essential it is that the preachers should be so! What a lovely account of the divine prescience and knowledge is here given of our God, *His eyes*, not barely looking on, but *running through the earth*. And this, not to inform himself, but to convince his people, how near at hand he is to their deliverance. Blessed Jesus! grant that I may never lose sight of this precious truth. Surely, dear Lord, if thou art looking on, well may I be confident in thee and in thy strength. But what a melancholy thought it is when past experiences of the Lord's goodness are not found sufficient with our unbelieving hearts to beget an hearty, firm, and unshaken reliance. What a beautiful contrast to this conduct of Asa was that of Samuel between Mizpeh and Shem, when he set up his *Ebenezer*, saying, *Hitherto the Lord hath helped us*. 1 Sam. vii. 12. And cannot you and I, Reader, set up our *hitherto*. And if our present Ebenezer depend upon it we shall never, except from the unbelief of our hearts, say with truth, *the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me*. Isaiah xlix. 14.

10 Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for *he was* in a rage with him because of this *thing*. And Asa oppressed *some* of the people the same time.

Alas! what an awful picture is this of Asa. Oh! how evident it is when men grow cool towards God that they grow impatient of reproof; and how unbounded is the rage of the human mind! Not only the preacher, but the hearers, if they look as though they countenanced the sermon, will come in for a portion in the angry man's resentment.

11 ¶ And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

12 And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease *was* exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.

13 ¶ And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign.

14 And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds *of spices* prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him.

The disease of Asa seems to have been remarkable, as if it was peculiarly sent of the Lord, that it is so described,—Perhaps a lameness. He had confined the prophet, and now the Lord confines him. But the prophet's prison was converted into a palace, for the Lord was with him: *Asa's* palace into a dungeon, for he had not the light of the divine countenance. He sought aid from the physician. He forgot that it is the Lord's province to kill and to make alive, to bring down to the grave and to bring up. Oh! what miserable comforters are all men. Physicians are of no value except the Lord commissions them, either to the body or the soul. His death was awful. Of his burial we read, indeed, that it was attended with great pomp. But oh! how far preferable is one whisper of grace from the Lord, in a dying hour, than all the shouts of men without it over the unconscious ashes. Oh! for that voice to be heard and felt, both by Reader and Writer in the last hour, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!* Yes! blessed Jesus! let it be my portion to live *to* thee, and to die *in* thee; and then death will be as precious as spices, and lying down with Christ the sweetest odours. Rev. xiv. 13.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is impossible to close our view of the life of Asa without having the mind exercised with solemn thoughts concerning an history so very mysterious and extraordinary. The Holy Ghost hath twice caused it to be recorded in his history, that *though the high places were not removed; nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days.* Though his latter end therefore differed so materially from the beginning, yet are we led to hope that a work of grace had passed upon his soul; and though for his rebellion and departure, like a stubborn child under correction, he was put to bed in the dark; yet a child still, and mercifully considered so by his gracious God and Father in Christ.

But Reader! leaving the history of Asa, let you and I endeavour to make the suitable and becoming improvements from it, which a case so solemn and striking is highly calculated to propose. When we see as in his instance, and in the instance of others, such as the apostle Paul speaks of, in whose hearts a work of grace hath been manifested, that they still carry about with them a body of sin, oh! let it serve to teach us with what wariness and caution believers in Jesus should have their conversation in the world. If Paul himself groaned in consequence of this, and years after his regeneration declared that *he was carnal, sold under sin; that the good he would he did not; but that the evil which he*

would not that he did. Oh! think, my brother, what a mass of sin this unrenewed part of our nature the body is, and with what holy jealousy should we watch over it, lest it drag down the soul! How oft doth Satan, joining with the remaining corrupt lusts of our nature, intice us from Jesus; and in what numberless instances do we find our hearts wandering from all that is truly precious, from Jesus, from our happiness, from his word, from his people!

Oh! thou Holy One of Israel! the Lord our righteousness! how endeared art thou to my soul in this among a thousand other views in which I see and feel my daily need of thee. *Who shall deliver me from this body of death?* None but Jesus can accomplish this mighty work, for all the angels of heaven are incompetent to such a service. And blessed, for ever blessed be thy dear name, thou art truly called Jesus, because thou wilt save thy people from their sins. Thou hast redeemed them by thy blood from all the powers of hell and darkness; and thou hast, and wilt save them from themselves and their own corrupt nature. *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, (saith God by his servant the prophet) or shall the lawful captive be delivered.* And Reader! recollect every sinner is a *lawful captive*, who by sin hath given himself to the service of Satan. *But thus, saith the Lord, even the captives of the mighty, shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered. For I will contend with them that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.* Isaiah xlix. 24, 25. Oh! precious, precious promise of a covenant God in Christ, made to the person of our dear Immanuel; and in him confirmed sure to all his seed.

CHAP. XVII.

CONTENTS.

We arrive now in the history of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah to the record concerning Jehoshaphat the son of Asa. He hath a prosperous reign. He appointeth teachers in Judah. An account of his greatness.

AND Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel.

2 And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken.

3 And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim.

4 But sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel.

The account here given of Jehoshaphat's prudence in strengthening

himself in his kingdom, is far less interesting than what is said of him, of his walking in the counsel of the Lord. The most lovely feature in every character is that of grace. How truly becoming is it, since we owe every thing we have to the Lord, that the bountiful giver should have, if but as tenants of such a Lord, the just rent of his own property.

5 Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance.

6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah.

And Reader! do observe how the Lord's blessing is sure to accompany such conduct. Our God will never be backward; but be always before hand in rewarding the services of his creatures. Though he needs nothing from them, and indeed strictly speaking it is of his own they offer, yet he is graciously pleased to make himself debtor to his creatures, and to accept *that* as a *gift* which from them is indeed a just *debt*.

7 ¶ Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his princes, *even* to Ben-hail and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nathaneel, and to Micahiah, to teach in the cities of Judah,

8 And with them *he sent* Levites, *even* Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests.

9 And they taught in Judah, and *had* the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.

I do not recollect a more beautiful representation given of any of the kings of Israel any where, than what is here given of Jehoshaphat in his sending forth teachers to bring his subjects acquainted with the law of the Lord. The teachers also are highly spoken of, in that when they went forth to instruct, their teaching was concerning the Lord; for it is said that they had the book of the law of the Lord with them. In the present hour ministers of Jesus should never be without their Bibles, for this is their authority by which they may establish the truths which they teach, and put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

10 And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the

kingdoms of the lands that *were* round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.

It plainly proves how much ~~the~~ Lord approved of Jehoshaphat's instructing the people, for he suffered no interruption to the pious work to take place from the nations around.

11 Also *some* of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he goats.

It is more than probable these presents were to preserve peace, for the greatness of Jehoshaphat made him formidable, and the fear of the Lord had fallen upon the countries around.

12 ¶ And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles, and cities of store.

13 And he had much business in the cities of Judah: and the men of war, mighty men of valour, *were* in Jerusalem.

14 And these *are* the numbers of them according to the house of their fathers: Of Judah, the captains of thousands: Adnah the chief, and with him mighty men of valour three hundred thousand.

15 And next to him *was* Jehonanan the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand.

16 And next him *was* Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the LORD; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour.

17 And of Benjamin; Eliada a mighty man of valour, and with him armed men with bow and shield two hundred thousand.

18 And next him *was* Jehozabad, and with him an hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for the war.

19 These waited on the king, beside *those* whom

the king put in the fenced cities throughout all Judah.

When we behold Jehoshaphat, and his court, and army, his teachers, among the princes and the schools, which he had established through his kingdom, we are led to conclude that Judah, during his reign must have been in a state of great happiness and prosperity. That sweet song which David sung in his days might have been sung by Jehoshaphat in his. For it was the same Lord which giveth salvation unto kings that delivered him, as well as David, from the peril of the sword. Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Psm. cxliv. 15.

REFLECTIONS.

It is highly gratifying in the perusal of the word of God, when we behold his servants zealous for his honor, and making his glory the first object of their concern. And however, in different ages of the church, and under the different dispensations of the Old Testament scripture or the New, we behold various characters, still it is precious to remark how the children of the Lord have all one family feature in their knowledge and love of him. Begotten by the same Father; purchased by the same Redeemer; and brought under the influence of the same Spirit; they are adopted into the same sonship, and are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. The image of the Lord they are changed into by grace; they are impressed with it, for it is engraven on their foreheads, and the Spirit of the Lord is in their hearts. So that every thing concerning them becomes precious and interesting. God their Father marked them for his own from everlasting; and in the person of his dear Son he chose them and loved them from all eternity. And in time he hath provided for all their wants, and watches over them with thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give them an expected end. God the Son received them from his Father as his gift, and by becoming their husband, head, and surety, made them the purchase of his blood, and became interested in all that concerned them, through time to all eternity. And God the Spirit graciously undertook in his blessed office-work to bring them savingly acquainted with the Father, and with Christ, and make them the willing subjects of his grace in the day of his power. So that from the united mercy, love, and blessing, of the sacred three in one, their minds, like Jehoshaphat's, are secretly inclined to the love, and reverence, and obedience, and faith, of God in Christ. They desire to love what the Lord loves, and to hate what the Lord hates. They pray to be brought into an holy conformity to his will in all things. Jesus is precious, his word, his ordinances, his laws, his people. And while they take delight in whatever tends to the promotion of the Redeemer's glory, they feel distress in whatever brings dishonour to his most holy name or his word. Reader! are these, more or less, in all ages the real characters of God's people? let your heart and mine see to it then that we have such testimonies of our adoption and sonship.

CHAP. XVIII.

CONTENTS.

This chapter informs us of the treaty Jehoshaphat made with Ahab, to go against Ramoth-gilead to battle; and the consequence of the war. Ahab is slain. Jehoshaphat is spared.

NOW Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.

We have the relation of this connection between Jehoshaphat and Ahab, together with what follows, in the battle of Ramoth-gilead, in the 1 Kings xxii. so that I refer the reader thither for what is remarked upon it. In addition I would just observe, that it was an affinity of marriage between the royal houses of Judah and Israel, that caused this junction in war, for (as it appears, 2 Chron. xxi. 6) Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, had married Ahab's daughter. But what a wretched alliance! and sorry I am to add, that in the present hour, even among many professing godliness, riches, and not grace, are too often made the object by which marriage-connections are formed. But of all such it may be said, *Be sure thy sin shall find thee out.* Numb. xxxii. 23.

2 And after *certain* years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that *he had* with him, and persuaded him to go up *with him* to Ramoth-gilead.

3 And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, *I am as thou art*, and my people as thy people; and *we will* be with thee in the war.

See how the alliance began to work. Jehoshaphat is enticed into a battle. Ramoth-gilead in fact belonged to Jehoshaphat, for it was a city in the tribe of Gad. And yet Ahab it seems meant, had he conquered, to have united it to his kingdom.

4 ¶ And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day.

5 Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for God will deliver *it* into the king's hand.

6 But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?

7 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is yet one man*, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same *is* Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

8 And the king of Israel called for one of *his* officers, and said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla.

9 And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah sat either of them on his throne, clothed in *their* robes, and they sat in a void place at the entering in of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

10 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the LORD, With these thou shalt push Syria until they be consumed.

11 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

12 And the messenger that went to call Micaiah spake to him, saying, Behold, the words of the prophets *declare* good to the king with one assent; let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of their's, and speak thou good,

13 And Micaiah said, *As* the LORD liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak.

14 And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And he said, Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand.

15 And the king said to him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name of the LORD?

16 Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master; let them return *therefore* every man to his house in peace.

17 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee *that* he would not prophecy good unto me, but evil?

18 Again he said, Therefore hear the word of the LORD; I saw the LORD sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and *on* his left.

19 And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? and one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner.

20 Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith?

21 And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And *the* LORD said, Thou shalt entice *him*, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do *even* so.

22 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil against thee.

23 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, Which way went the spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?

24 And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see on that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.

25 Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;

26 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 return in peace.

27 And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, *then* hath not the LORD spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, all ye people.

28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.

29 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went to the battle.

30 Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that *were* with him, saying, Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel.

31 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; and God moved them to *depart* from him.

32 For it came to pass, that, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back again from pursuing him.

33 And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness; therefore he said to his chariot man, Turn thine hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

34 And the battle increased that day: howbeit the king of Israel stayed *himself* up in *his* chariot against the Syrians until the even: and about the time of the sun going down he died.

This account is so similar, as far as it goes, to what is related in the book of the Kings already referred to, that I do not think it necessary to

make any further observations, unless it be on that clause which is particularly added here, but not noticed in the former history, that at the crying out of Jehoshaphat, (verse 31), *the Lord helped him, and moved the Syrians to depart from him.* It is delightful to observe how the Lord, who hath all hearts at his disposal, can and will interpose for the deliverance of his servants when all human aid fails. The Lord may permit, as in the case of Jehoshaphat, that our sins and backslidings shall correct; they may and sometimes will, bring us into extreme danger; but in every temptation *the Lord will make a way to escape*; and though not for our deserts, but for his great name's sake, he will save in time of need.

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, Reader, over the perusal of this chapter, and passing by for the present other considerations, let your meditations with mine be deeply exercised in beholding the striking contrast between the false and lying prophets here represented, seducing Ahab to his ruin, and the faithful honest Micaiah, in foretelling to him what would take place.

Nothing in history, nothing in all the events of the world, nothing in the setting up, or putting down empires, bears the least proportion, in point of magnitude and importance, to that of men drawing the line of eternal distinction between true and false teachers, concerning the truths *as they are in Jesus.*

Who in the days of Ahab would have ventured to have called in question those four hundred prophets, who all with one voice concurred in sending Ahab to battle with full assurance of success; and who backed their commission in the name of the Lord? And who would have ventured to come forward, when the poor solitary prophet Micaiah, from the prison, foretold the awful event hanging ready to fall upon the head of the king, and to have justified his faithfulness? But the event manifested where the truth lay. It is not pomp, nor parade, though accompanied with pretended commissions from Jesus, can certify to truth. Men, destitute themselves of saving knowledge, can never be safely followed in what they deliver on divine things. And the Lord Jesus himself hath marked *hirelings* in such plain characters, as leave it no great matter of difficulty to discover the object of their ministry. They may, like the four hundred, be numerous, be of one mind, discourse with great confidence, and of certain success; but the apostle awfully speaks of the bringers in of heresies, *even denying the Lord that brought them, that they shall bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

The *Micaiahs* of the present day may be, as he was, exposed to much persecution. Like Paul and his few faithful followers, they may be held up as a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. And faithfulness will be sure, when exercised in the reproving sinners, to bring upon them the obloquy, the scorn, the derision, to speak the best of it, of men; and to provoke the rage of devils. But if their ministry be directed to exalt the Saviour, and humble the sinner; if they preach Christ, and not themselves; set forth the wretchedness of man in his highest attainments, and insist upon the person, offices, blood, and righteousness of Jesus, as the whole of salvation; here we may safely join issue with what so fully corresponds to the counsel of God in the salvation of sin-

ners. Christ is declared to be both the wisdom of God and the power of God for salvation, to every one that believeth. These are they *whose faith I pray you to follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*

CHAP. XIX.

CONTENTS.

We have related in this Chapter a further account of the reign of Jehoshaphat. He returns to his kingdom after the battle of Ramoth-gilead. He sets judges over the land.

AND Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

No doubt the peace which is here spoken of, means the sense he had of the Lord's goodness in preserving his life in so critical a moment of danger at the battle. It is probable that by this time the mind of the king had been led to consider that he had been out of the path of duty, and therefore the mercy he had received was a double mercy, and being so widely distinguished from the fate of Ahab, he could not but return to his house and family in peace.

2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.

3 Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

This Jehu was the son of that faithful prophet whom Asa his father put into prison for his faithfulness. A worthy son of so worthy a father. But let us remark rather the grace and mercy of the Lord towards Jehoshaphat. The Lord saved him in the day of battle, though the wrath of the Lord was upon him, as it is said. Reader! it is precious to behold how the Lord in the midst of judgment remembers mercy. Sweetly the Psalmist views this in his penitential supplication. *If thou Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord who shall stand! But there is mercy, there is Jesus with thee.* His blood and righteousness plead when iniquities testify against his children: Psm. cxxx. 3, 4.

4 And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

5 ¶ And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city,

6 And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who *is* with you in the judgment.

7 Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do *it*: for *there is* no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

8 Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and *of* the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.

9 And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.

10 And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and *so* wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass.

11 And, behold, Amariah the chief priest *is* over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites *shall be* officers before you. Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good.

We hear of no complaint nor anger in Jehoshaphat, like that of Asa at the reproof of the prophet. But we find on the contrary, his heart setting about a greater reform in his kingdom. He abides at home at Jerusalem his capital, and goes no more to foreign wars. His going forth is only through his own kingdom, to look over the magistrates whom he had appointed to preside over the people. And what a pious charge is recorded here concerning his address to the judges. Nothing, surely, can afford a more lovely view than what is here held forth of Jehoshaphat. In every point, as a king, as a servant of the Lord, and as a friend of the people, Jehoshaphat appears illustrious indeed;

and the Holy Ghost hath handed down his memory with great honor to all succeeding generations in the church.

REFLECTIONS.

Reader! let us pause over the history here presented to us, and gather from the perusal some of those sweet and interesting instructions which are presented to our meditation.

In the peaceable and happy return of Jehoshaphat to his house after so merciful a deliverance, let us learn to estimate divine mercies, and rightly to receive them. Is not every return to our house, to our families, to our home, a token of divine favour? And are not those mercies heightened if, at any time, like Jehoshaphat, we have gone out without prayer, without seeking the divine blessing, without divine direction; nay, perhaps, like Jehoshaphat, in opposition to the divine will and pleasure. Nay, more than these; when, as in the instance before us, our return to our house in peace hath been distinguished from others who, like Ahab, went out in health as Jehoshaphat, but returned no more. What numberless examples of a similar kind are going on in the present hour in the world, in which we are called upon to mark the distinguishing mercy? And shall not our unthinking hearts sometimes pause, and behold the Lord's hand in conducting out, and bringing home in peace and safety.

And if a real follower of the Lord Jesus be brought to such views of divine favor, will he not eye the tokens as tenfold brighter, and enjoy them with tenfold sweetness, when viewing them as covenant blessings, and accepting them as such from his interest in Jesus! Hath a God in Christ entailed blessings both on soul and body; hath he promised, by virtue of covenant redemption in the blood and righteousness of his dear Son, to bless his people both in their basket and in their store; in their going out and their coming in; blessings in the city, and blessings in the field; blessings in time, and blessings to all eternity? and shall not every follower of the Lord Jesus find a relish and a sweetness of the richest kind from perceiving the covenant love with which every one of them is brought home to the heart, marked in the plainest characters of the Father's love, the Saviour's grace, and the Spirit's fellowship. Yes! thou dearest Jesus! when I see thy love in the mercy, and the precious fruits of thy redemption in the favor, be it what it may; whether at going out, or returning home in peace, then will my joy be full. It is Jesus *in* the blessing, and the love of Jesus *with* the blessing, which gives the finishing relish to all, and furnishes a *joy unspeakable and full of glory*.

In the faithfulness of the prophet let us not only behold the loveliness of being always firm in the cause of the Lord, but pray for grace to follow so bright an example. An openness and integrity of conduct in speaking truths, however unpleasant, is not limited to the ministry; there are few characters in life but may find occasion for the exercise of it in numberless situations: a father to his child, or a servant to his master. And when God and our conscience demands such services there should be no hesitation.

Lastly. In the reformation set up by Jehoshaphat, we may gather a

sweet and precious instruction, how grace operates, when the Lord awakens it in the mind. We hear no reproof, no expostulation, no anger, no excuse on the part of Jehoshaphat, towards the prophet. Grace was in the heart of Jehoshaphat, while the prophet was delivering his message from the Lord. And the blessed effects of both, in the word of the Lord from without, and the grace of the Lord within, wrought those sweet consequences in the mind of Jehoshaphat. Let us learn from hence how to estimate the work of grace. It is not he which merely confesseth sin, but the promise is, *he that confesseth and forsaketh it, shall*, through Jesus and his complete salvation, *find mercy*.

CHAP. XX.

CONTENTS.

We have here Jehoshaphat in trouble. War is threatened him: he proclaimeth a fast: he offers up prayer: the Lord hears, and answers in mercy: his enemies are overthrown. The close of his reign.

IT came to pass after this also, *that* the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them *other* beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle.

2 Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they *be* in Hazazon-tamar, which is Engedi.

This formidable attempt, planned by the enemies of Jehoshaphat, it should seem, had been carried on so secretly, that they had already invaded his country, before he was apprized of it. How subtle is the enemy of souls! What secret methods he bath, by means of his invisible agency, on the hearts of the Lord's people, before that they are aware of his approaches!

3 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

4 And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask *help* of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

Reader! do remark with me, how this pious soldier began his defence: not in mustering his soldiers; not in raising his army; but in humbling himself and his people before the Lord. Do, my Brother, put it down for certain, whatever begins with prayer, will find cause to end in praise. Jehoshaphat had his fears; for sin and guilt breed fear. But he adopted the best method to overcome them. *He sought the*

Lord. Where shall a sinner go in his distresses, but to the great and gracious Saviour? Observe how all Judah took part with their king. No doubt Jehoshaphat had endeared himself by his gentleness to his subjects, and therefore they were all united, as the heart of one man, to seek the Lord.

5 ¶ And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court,

6 And said, O LORD God of our fathers, *art* not thou God in heaven? and rulest *not* thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand *is there not* power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

7 *Art* not thou our God, *who* didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?

8 And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying,

9 If, *when* evil cometh upon us, *as* the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name *is* in this house), and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

10 And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not.

11 Behold, *I say*, *how* they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit.

12 O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.

13 And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

This is a beautiful prayer, and both the manner of address, with the appearance of the king and his people make it striking. All Judah it is said, with their little ones, and wives and children, stood before the Lord, as if to join in the entreaty. Surely it must have had a most interesting effect. And observe the argument of the prayer. *First*, Jehoshaphat pleads God's sovereignty; *next*, God's relationship in the covenant engagements he had condescended to put himself into, as Abraham's God, and to his seed in Israel; *next*, the dedication of the people to God according to Solomon's address; with an eye to the temple, by which they had a claim to God's favour. After stating these things as the foundation of an assurance in God's protection, Jehoshaphat brings forward the present affliction as the time for the Lord to work in their rescue. He then shews the baseness of Moab and the confederate army, in that the Lord would not suffer his people to molest them when they came out of Egypt. And, *lastly*, Jehoshaphat concludes with throwing himself and his people upon the sovereignty of their God, as those that could not but be certain of success in the divine favour. There is a vast degree of sound faith and confidence, with fervent piety, in this prayer, and it is not difficult to trace the leadings of grace through the several parts of it. But, methinks, if the Reader considers it spiritually, and with an eye to the gospel, it ariseth to an infinitely higher point of sublimity. Salvation by Jesus is founded in the sovereignty of Jehovah. Here we discover the everlasting love and wisdom of God in the ordination. Here also God hath put himself in the closest covenant-relationship, in the person of his dear Son; for God in Christ is truly the God of our fathers. And as Jehoshaphat pointed to the temple as the sanctuary of defence, to which the distressed Israelite was to look; was not this typical of Jesus? How beautiful then is it to behold gospel mercies in the finished redemption of Jesus, thus shadowed forth in an age so remote from the time of the gospel, when the open display of mercy was to be made known in the Lord Jesus Christ!

14 ¶ Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation:

15 And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not your's, but God's.

16 To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel.

17 Ye shall *not* need to fight in this *battle*: set yourselves, stand ye *still*, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD *will be* with you.

Observe the astonishing grace of the Lord manifested upon this occasion. It was instant, it was immediate; similar to that of Daniel's vision. *At the beginning of the supplication*, the commandment then came forth to Daniel. And here, while Jehoshaphat was speaking, the Lord answered. Dan. ix. 19—21. Isaiah lxxv. 24. And observe further, by whom did God vouchsafe to speak?—Even by a poor Levite, *Jahaziel*. The humblest instrument is sufficient, when the Lord is pleased to work. And remark further, how sure the promise is, *To-morrow* shall bring forward their deliverance. And to decide *from* whom, and *by* whom the blessing comes; God himself will fight the battle for them; like another Moses, the direction is, *Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord*. Exod. xiv. 13.

18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

19 And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

It is not within the compass of language to convey to the Reader, what must have been the feelings of the whole assembly on this occasion. What an holy awe, mingled with holy joy, must have thrilled through every heart. But, Reader! think, if the imagination be able to picture it, what will be the feelings of that vast assembly of the redeemed, when Jesus will own them before Jehovah, and a congregated world, as the purchase of his blood, the trophies of his grace, and the gift of his Father.

20 And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

21 And when he had consulted with the people he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that

should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Observe, the weapons of Jehoshaphat were faith, and dependance on the Lord. Whether the company with the king had other weapons with them is not said: but he went forth depending upon the Lord; and he begun the preparation for battle with a song of victory. So should all the soldiers of Jesus go forth. For it is in his strength they fight: and the issue is not doubtful. The fight is in fact already over; Christ hath conquered: and his people overcome by his blood.

22 ¶ And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

23 For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy *them*: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

24 And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they *were* dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

25 And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil it was so much.

How decidedly did the event testify that Judah should have no hand in the victory. How fully hath Jesus shewn in his gospel, that salvation is wholly his own, and his right arm hath gotten himself the victory!

26 And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day.

27 Then they returned, every man of Judah

and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies.

28 And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD.

29 And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of *those* countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel.

30 So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.

The valley of *Berachah*, which signifies *blessing*, was probably a large convenient spot for the people to assemble in to join their praises. And, no doubt, as they went home they sung victory and praises to the Lord all the way. Such a deliverance, and so wrought, called for thanksgiving all their lives. And here was a subject for every day to be rehearsed in every family of Judah, that the memory of it might be preserved throughout all generations, that *the children which had not known any thing, might hear and fear the Lord their God* as long as they lived. Deut. xxxi. 13.

31 ¶ And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah: *he* 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.

32 And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing *that which* was right in the sight of the LORD.

33 Howbeit the high places were not taken away: for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers.

34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, who *is* mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel.

We arrive to the close of Jehoshaphat's reign and life together. The length of it was not equal to many of the kings of Judah, though such honourable testimony is given of him. Perhaps the records concerning him, said here to be in the writings of the book of Jehu, might have

been extant for a long space after his death; but not being of sacred authority, they were not made a part of the Canon of Scripture.

35 And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly:

36 And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber.

37 Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Maresah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

This affinity with the house of Ahab, had cost Jehoshaphat his life, but for divine interposition before. But yet we find a renewed instance of that folly, so as to call forth the reproof again of a prophet. Alas! it is impossible to keep company with, or to be in the society of the carnal; and the precept is unaccommodating, *Come out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing.* 2 Cor. vi. 17.

REFLECTIONS.

WHERE shall believing souls fly in their trouble, but to a covenant God in Christ! Like Jehoshaphat, we are told, and from the unquestionable authority of God's word, that the children of *Ammon*, and the children of *Moab*, even the host of foes arising out of the world, from our own corrupt nature, and from the powers of darkness, all come forth against us, day by day, to battle. But if, like Jehoshaphat, instead of mustering human strength, and human skill, we take refuge in the God of our salvation; if we go forth, dearest Jesus, in thy name, and in thy righteousness make our boast, we shall be more than conquerors, through thy grace helping us. And we shall assuredly find the valley of *Berachah*: every place indeed will open room for blessing, for every event will furnish cause for it. But learn, my soul, in the midst of all the precious things which this chapter contains, of God's covenant love and mercy to his people, what corruptions still remain in our old nature. Is it not now, as it was with Jehoshaphat and Judah, amidst all the reform set up? Are there not the sad effects still to be found, of what the human heart is with believers now, as with Judah then? It is said that *the high places were not taken away; for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts.* Oh! precious Jesus! do I not know, do I not feel the daily workings of a corrupt nature? And though thou hast wrought out, thou blessed Finisher of salvation, a complete deliverance for me in thy blood and righteousness, yet, as if to keep me daily, hourly sensible that the work is all of grace; and what I

once needed in bringing me out of nature's darkness, I daily need to keep me from falling back to it again; art thou not shewing me that the high places of vanity, pride, self-righteousness, and the breakings out of sin, all contradictory as they are to one another, yet annoy my poor soul, and manifest what a poor creature I am continually. Lord! overrule these things to thy glory! Give me to see thy preciousness! Enable me to improve mine interest in thee from day to day, that being stript of every thing, I may lean wholly upon thee and seek comfort only in thy finished work. Oh! for grace thus to live a life of faith upon the Son of God, and to make mention of thy righteousness, even thine only.

CHAP. XXI.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter opens with the history of the commencement of the reign of Jehoram, who succeeded Jehoshaphat. A melancholy history it contains of his wicked reign. Here is recorded his awful disease, death, and burial.

NOW Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

2 And he had brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah: all these *were* the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel.

3 And their father gave them great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah: but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram; because he was the firstborn.

4 Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and *divers* also of the princes of Israel.

5 ¶ Jehoram *was* thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

6 And he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD.

One of the first thoughts which seems to strike my mind, in the view of what is here recorded in the sad picture of Jehoram, so contrasted to his pious father, is the degeneracy of our fallen nature. Grace is not hereditary. That the children of God in Christ are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, is most evident in all generations. Reader! mark this as an observation, for the church of God confirms it from the beginning. Abraham had an Ishmael, and Isaac an Esau, as well as Jehoshaphat a Jehoram. Do not fail to observe also, how the Holy Ghost hath marked one cause of Jehoram's transgressions; for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife. Oh! that the alliances among gracious persons were more regarded in their descendants!

7 Howbeit the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever.

God's covenant love is a point of so much importance to be attended to in the history of the church, that the Holy Ghost hath caused it to be recorded both here and in the parallel history, 2 Kings viii. 19. Sweet thought! that the love of God to his people, founded as it is in covenant faithfulness, and originating as it doth, not in man's merit, but God's free grace, is not lost or forfeited, either to the church at large, or the individual who is the happy object of it, from undeservings. Psm. lxxxix. 30—35.

8 In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king.

9 Then Jehoram went forth with his princes, and all his chariots with him: and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him in, and the captains of the chariots.

10 So the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. The same time *also* did Libnah revolt from under his hand: because he had forsaken the LORD God of his fathers.

11 Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah *thereto*.

Observe how the Lord raiseth up afflictions from the sinner's own backslidings. The Holy Ghost marks this elsewhere in strong expressions; Jerem. ii. 19. And the history of Jehoram is not singular in proof of it. I believe, if God's people were to watch with a jealous eye,

so as to connect their corrections with their sins, they would be led frequently to trace, that punishments spring as naturally out of iniquities, as streams issue from a fountain.

12 And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah,

13 But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, *which were* better than thyself:

14 Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods:

15 And thou *shalt have* great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day.

16 Moreover the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that *were* near the Ethiopians.

17 And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.

18 ¶ And after all this the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease.

19 And it came to pass, that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers.

Elijah, the prophet, lived much about the time as Jehoshaphat and Ahab. But Elisha had succeeded him in his office when Jehoram had the government of Judah. It is probable, however, that the reign of Jehoram might have begun before the translation of Elijah; and there-

fore this written message came to him in the Lord's name from his departing servant. And observe how very awful the contents of it. It first opens to his view, the great enormities he had been guilty of. Impious to God; and cruel to man: a murderer even of his own brothers! It next marks his punishment, and that is to be exemplarily striking. Yet we hear of no compunction, no sorrow, no turning to the Lord by penitence and reformation, though it should seem a long period was allowed him before it was inflicted. And in the mean time, a more general visitation of foreign enemies, whom the Lord stirred up against him, as if to see what gentler corrections would accomplish. And Reader! do notice how progressive the Lord made those judgments. First, in the enemies from without; then distresses within. His children, his wives, his substance taken away into captivity. And last of all, his own person under this dreadful disease: no doubt loathsome as well as painful. And this protracted to the long period of two years. Alas! even in this life, what awful effects do we daily behold in the visitations of God on sinners.

20 Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired. Howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

And as he lived so he died, unpitied and disregarded. No funeral pomp, nor tears to lament his loss. Nay, the Holy Ghost hath marked it down, as if to be particularly noticed, *that he departed without being desired*. So truly worthless in life, and so deservedly despised in death. Such was the termination of the life of Jehoram in the very prime of life, being only forty when he died, and his reign of infamy extended but to eight years!

REFLECTIONS.

Who can contemplate the awful character of *Jehoram* without dismay! Who can read such a sad page of history in the life of man, without being struck at the sad degeneracy of human nature! And is this the real representation of all men by nature! Are all men liable to the same conduct, and, but for preventing and restraining grace, would invariably pursue the same steps, if similar circumstances of temptation surrounded them! Pause, my soul, over such a view! Am I by nature a child of wrath, even as others? Did I bring with me into existence every seed of sin; equally prone to ignorance, blindness, hardness of heart, pride, worldly affections of every kind, envy, malice, hatred, covetousness, and all the deadly fruit of a deadly stock, deeply rooted in my nature! Is this the real state of my soul, and the soul of every son and daughter of Adam! Should I, but for grace, have been for ever ignorant of Jesus, unconscious of the glories of his person, unacquainted with the work of his redemption, totally regardless of his love, ignorant of the importance of his salvation, and not only averse to the desire of it, but even unconscious that I needed it! Was this my case, dearest, blessed, compassion-

ate Jesus, when thou first looked upon me, when thou didst pass by and saw me in my blood, and didst bid me live! Should I never, but for this grace of thine, have heard thy voice, seen thy face by happy faith, tasted of thy goodness, and my hands been made to handle of the word of life! Do I really now love thee, thou precious Emmanuel, and was this the cause, because thou didst first love me! Oh! matchless goodness! oh! unequalled love! oh! precious, precious Redeemer, friend of poor sinners! Lord cause me to love thee, to live to thee, to hang upon thee, to cleave to thee more and more. Surely a whole eternity will be too short to speak thy praise! Lord take me, make me thine, poor and wretched as I am, for all I am, and all I have, soul and body, are all too little to offer, and too mean to testify thy praise, thou Almighty Saviour of our ruined and undone nature!

CHAP. XXII.

CONTENTS.

Ahaziah's history openeth at this Chapter. He succeedeth to the throne—makes a wicked reign, and is slain by Jehu. Athaliah destroyeth all the royal seed, except Joash.

AND the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his stead: for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned.

We have the parallel history to what is here recorded in the 2d of Kings xi. So that for brevity's sake I refer the Reader to that part of the sacred writings. The great point to be attended to in this historical relation, and for which, no doubt, the Holy Ghost hath caused a duplicate of this history to be preserved was, that the church might see how the promised seed, in leading to Christ, hath been preserved. Ahaziah and Joash shall be kept safe amidst all danger, because the grand event of redemption is the great point all along referred to. *Destroy it not, there is a blessing in it.* Isaiah lxx. 8.

2 Forty and two years old *was* Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Athaliah the daughter of Omri.

3 He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly.

4 Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction.

5 ¶ He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead: and the Syrians smote Joram.

6 And he returned to be healed in Jezreel because of the wounds which were given him at Ramah, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria. And Azariah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab at Jezreel, because he was sick.

7 And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab.

8 And it came to pass, that, when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, and found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah, that ministered to Ahaziah, he slew them.

9 And he sought Ahaziah: and they caught him, (for he was hid in Samaria,) and brought him to Jehu: and when they had slain him, they buried him: Because, said they, he is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart. So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom.

I do not think it necessary to detain the Reader on this part of the history, because it is more particularly set forth in the book of the Kings already gone through, which the Reader may consult.

10 ¶ But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah.

11 But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of

Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not.

12 And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land.

How beautiful it is to see the Lord's watchful care over his people, Moses shall be hid when his life is threatened. Joash shall be secured when danger is near. Nay, Jesus shall be carried into Egypt when the monster Herod seeks his life. Reader! how evidently doth the Lord manifest himself when he hideth his people!

REFLECTIONS.

OBSERVE, my soul, in the history of this chapter, the awful consequences of sin! What a short triumph had Ahaziah. Life is but a year, and when that year is spent in sin and folly, what a wretched life is made of it? How awful are the consequences which arise out of improper and irreligious alliances! But what blessed effects have taken place in Jesus's union with our nature; and his betrothing himself to his people! Our alliance with ungracious persons or in families, is sure to bring on numberless evils. But the Lord Jesus condescending to unite us to himself, hath introduced us into the happiest state, the wonder of angels, and the admiration of a congregated world for ever more. Oh! dear Lord, break for ever, in my soul, all affinities and relations which may tend to interrupt my joy and happiness with thee, and do thou take the whole possession of my heart, and reign and rule there with unrivalled sway. *I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.*

CHAP. XXIII.

CONTENTS.

The history is pursued through this Chapter. Joash is made king. Athaliah is slain. Jehoiada restoreth the worship of God.

AND in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jehoram, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, And Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him.

Here we have introduced the beginning of that revolution which was so favourable to the interest both of the church and kingdom.

2 And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the

chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem.

3 And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD hath said of the sons of David.

4 This *is* the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you entering on the sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, *shall be* porters of the doors;

5 And a third part *shall be* at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation: and all the people *shall be* in the courts of the house of the LORD.

6 But let none come into the house of the LORD, save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites; they shall go in, for they *are* holy: but all the people shall keep the watch of the LORD.

7 And the Levites shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whosoever *else* cometh into the house, he shall put to death: but be ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out.

8 So the Levites and all Judah did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest had commanded, and took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that were to go *out* on the sabbath: for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses.

9 Moreover Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds spears, and bucklers, and shields, that *had been* king David's, which *were* in the house of God.

10 And he set all the people, every man having his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the temple to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about.

11 Then they brought out the king's son, and

put upon him the crown, and *gave him* the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king.

We need not dwell particularly upon the relation here given of this event, because we have already considered it in the history which is delivered in nearly the same words, 2 Kings xi. I would only beg the Reader to make a spiritual remark as he passeth through it, and observe with me how often the Lord Jesus, the lawful king of his people, is hidden from them, while his enemies in our corrupt nature, the world and the devil usurp, as Athaliah did, not merely for six years together, but many a six years during our unregeneracy, the empire of our hearts. Oh! precious Lord Jesus! thou art that priest indeed which, in the *seventh* year of Jubilee, hast brought liberty to thy captives!

12 ¶ Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the LORD:

13 And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of musick, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, treason.

14 Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the LORD.

15 So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king's house, they slew her there.

When the day of judgment, even in this life, comes to the wicked, what an awful day it is! And what will that tremendous day of God be, when it shall arrive in another! The rejoicing of the people at the sight of their king, may serve to give us some faint idea how lovely the sight of Jesus is to a poor soul who hath long groaned under the tyranny of Satan, as Judah had under the tyranny of Athaliah. And, Reader! let your imagination conceive, if it can, what will be the bursts of joy when Jesus shall appear on his throne of glory, and the redeemed surrounding him in the realms above.

16 ¶ And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORD's people.

17 Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.

18 Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the LORD by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, as *it is* written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, *as it was ordained* by David.

19 And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the LORD, that none *which was* unclean in any thing should enter in.

20 And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of the LORD: and they came through the high gate into the king's house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom.

21 And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

There is a beautiful order in the account here given. The *first* object of reform is to shew that God graciously looks upon his people and remembers his covenant. The covenant that is said to be made, is between him, and between all the people, and between the king. *Him* means, no doubt, the Lord, and Jehoiada, as his priest, might be supposed to represent him. Sweetly suggesting to us Jesus, our glorious Head and Mediator, whom Jehoiada typified. Hence, what a beautiful portion of gospel comes in, in the midst of this history? And where we expected to find nothing but a simple narrative concerning Judah, here we find a lovely shadow of the Lord Jesus! The *next* object in this revolution of Judah is the destruction of Baal and his images. When the hearts of the people are turned back again to the Lord, then immediately follows the destruction of idolatry. Reader! how precious a part of our holy faith is it, when we so love the Lord as to hate his enemies, David makes this the subject of appeal in proof of his sincerity, *Do not*

I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? Psm. cxxxix. 21. The third step in the reform of Judah, is the arrangement of the temple service. During the usurpation and tyranny of Athaliah all had gone to disorder. But now the Lord shall be again worshipped *in the beauty of holiness*. And *lastly*, all the departments of government were brought into regularity and order. So that when God is honoured in his house of prayer, and true religion prevails through the land, all ranks of the people are made happy; *there is no leading into captivity, no complaining in the streets*. Well might the Psalmist, in the view of such a nation, cry out; *Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord*. Psm. clxiv. 15.

REFLECTIONS.

I WOULD pass over both the history itself, and all the circumstances connected with it, while I review the gracious events the Lord's right hand here accomplished, to give my meditation wing in flying to the yet more precious subject of that revolution wrought by grace, when sin and rebellion, with all the usurpation of Satan, are put down in the heart of man. I desire to bless God for the mercies here wrought for his Judah, and that he raised up this *Jehoiada* for the deliverance of his people. But oh! my soul, think of that everlasting deliverance wrought for all his people, when God our father brought forth his dear Son, his true *Jehoiada*, hid from ages and generations, and set him as his King in Zion, when declaring the decree of redemption in his name. Here was the everlasting overthrow of Satan's usurpation, tyranny, and power over our poor nature! Here was the final destruction of false gods, when the heathen oracles, by the coming of the Lord Jesus, were struck dumb for ever. And here was the introduction of that glorious kingdom of righteousness and peace, which shall flourish for ever. Hail, thou glorious, thou almighty Jesus! I see thee and thy lovely form beautifully shadowed forth in the character of *Jehoiada*, who ministered in thy name! Thou hast made a covenant indeed in thy blood and righteousness: for thou thyself art the whole of it. And it is thou that hast both set up the reform, and art the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of thy people. Oh! dearest Jesus! while the Father crowns thee King in Zion, and all the redeemed congratulate thee in thy coronation in the church of the first-born which are in heaven, do thou by the influences of thine Holy Spirit enable my soul to put the crown of my own personal redemption on thy sacred head, that I may exult as the people here did in the view of their lawful sovereign, for thou art my lawful God and King for evermore. And oh! my gracious Lord, while thou art blessing me with the communications of thy love, and my soul truly enjoys the fulness of blessings under thy reign, let thy grace draw out my heart in thy service, that all the idols of creature-affection may be destroyed, and Jesus alone govern my heart and affections for ever.

C H A P. XXIV.

CONTENTS.

We have in this Chapter the history of the reign of Joash. The death of Jehoiada. Joash falleth into idolatry. He is slain.

JOASH *was* seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Zibiah of Beer-sheba.

2 And Joash did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.

3 And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters.

4 And it came to pass after this, *that* Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD.

5 And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Judah; and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened *it* not.

6 And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the collection, *according to the commandment* of Moses the servant of the Lord, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witness?

7 For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim.

8 And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the LORD.

9 And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in to the LORD the

collection *that* Moses the servant of God *laid* upon Israel in the wilderness.

10 And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end.

11 Now it came to pass, that at what time the chest was brought unto the king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that *there was* much money, the king's scribe and the high priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance.

12 And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the LORD, and also such as wrought iron and brass to mend the house of the LORD.

13 So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it.

14 And when they had finished *it*, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the LORD, *even* vessels to minister, and to offer *withal*, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada.

We have the relation of what is here said concerning Joash so much the same in the parallell history, (2 Kings xii.) that I think it unnecessary to say more than to refer to it.

15 ¶ But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old *was he* when he died.

16 And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God and toward his house.

Precious in the sight of the Lord (we are told) *is the death of his*

saints. Psalm cxvi. 15. And the record which the Holy Ghost hath thought proper to make of the faithful in the sacred volume, is a blessed testimony of this truth.

17 ¶ Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them.

18 And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass.

19 Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them, but they would not give ear.

It is remarkable that the paralell history of Joash in the book of the Kings doth not take so much notice of his apostacy. But what an awful thing it is, when men listen to false counsellors, and are seduced under pretended friendship. In vain was the expostulation of the prophets. In vain is the gospel preached in the present hour, when the corrupt passions of the unawakened stifle all convictions.

20 And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper; because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you.

How lovely in the midst of such degenerate times appears this conduct of Zechariah. The imagination can hardly furnish a more amiable view than to behold faithful servants of the Lord daring to be zealous for the cause of God and of Christ, when the tide of the day is running violently against them. What a glorious evidence of faith this is, when, like Moses, men fear not the wrath of the king, because *they see him who is invisible.* Heb. xi. 27. But Reader! while we pay all due honour to such lovely characters, let us not overlook the cause. Zechariah was thus faithful, because *the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.* Oh! blessed gift. Lord! pour out of thy spirit now, we beseech thee, for *the residue of the Spirit is with thee!*

21 And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD.

22 Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon *it*, and require *it*.

What an awful state Joash fallen into! see, Reader! how faithfulness brings forth the glorious crown of martyrdom. Do you not suppose that at the last day, when Jesus comes to be glorified in his saints, his holy army of martyrs, who have really sealed the testimony of his truth with their blood, will appear with peculiar marks of distinction amidst the throng? I am inclined to think that this *Zechariah* is the same of whom our Lord speaks, Matt. xxiii. 35. For though he is said to be the son of *Baruchias*, yet it is well known that the Jews had two names. And Jehoiada and Baruchias might be one and our same person. And I am the more inclined to this opinion because our Lord's declaration concerning Zecharias in his blood being required, corresponds with what is here said by the dying prophet; *the Lord look upon it, and require it*; that is, he spake under the spirit of prophecy; the Lord will visit for it.

23 ¶ And it came to pass at the end of the year, *that* the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus.

24 For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash.

25 And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases,) his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David: but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings.

Here we have the visitation; and an awful visitation it was. It should seem that Joash not only slew Zechariah, but some other of his faithful servants children; for it is said *the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest*. And with what contempt was he buried! Thus died, unlamented, and disregarded, Joash.

26 And these are they that conspired against him; Zabad the son of Shimeath an Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith a Moabitess.

The names of the murderers of Joash being recorded, and their Gentile stock on the mother's side springing from Ammon and Moab, seems to have been done with a view to point out the aggravated sorrow of Joash

in his last moments. Not only to have died in his bed full of diseases, but under the sword of foreigners. The fear of this was what made Saul's last moments doubly distressing. 1 Sam. xxxi. 4.

27 Now *concerning* his sons, and the greatness of the burdens *laid* upon him, and the repairing of the house of God, behold, they *are* written in the story of the book of the kings. And Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

What these burdens were the Holy Ghost hath not thought proper to record. That Joash thus died, and his son Amaziah became his successor, is the finishing part of his history. Alas! what a melancholy page it forms!

REFLECTIONS.

The improvements to be gathered from the perusal of this chapter seem very obvious, and as important as they are plain. In the conduct of Joash we see to what an extent men may go in carrying on the purposes of religion when outward circumstances correspond to make it their interest, while all the while rottenness at the core is in the heart. In all this outside reform how plain is it that there is no regeneration, no work of God the Spirit; no turning of the heart to God; no real regard for his honour and glory. Oh! thou blessed Spirit of truth, thou glorifier of Jesus, let thy work on my soul be manifest. Plead, I beseech thee, O Almighty Lord, *with* my soul, and *in* my soul, the cause of Jesus. By thy discoveries to my own view of sin, of unbelief, of lusts, and all the train of corrupt affections, oh! give me to see, to feel, and to be earnest in seeking after Jesus in all his fulness, suitableness, and grace, that my whole soul may be truly brought over from dead works to serve the living and true God.

In the death of Zechariah let us behold the real, solid, and substantial worth of true faith. Oh! for grace to be *the followers of them who now through faith and patience inherit the promises!* See my soul, what a precious testimony the Lord Jesus in ages after gave to this his faithful servant's death. And thou, who livest in happier times, and art not called upon to resist unto blood, see that thou art always ready to bear testimony *to the truth as it is in Jesus.* *Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* Like Paul, count not thy life dear unto thyself, so that thou mayest finish thy course with joy, in fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life. Surrounded with such a cloud of witnesses, learn to run with patience the race that is set before thee, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith. Precious Lord! in all things do thou have the pre-eminency.

CHAP. XXV.

CONTENTS.

This chapter records the reign of Amaziah: his wars, his idolatry, the Lord's displeasure against him; his combat with Joash: his death.

AMAZIAH *was* twenty and five years old *when* he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart.

This expression of Amaziah's doing right in the Lord's sight, *but not with a perfect heart*, throws a light upon his whole character. What he did in a way of worship was in mere form and ceremony. He found it to be a matter of state policy to keep up the temple service. His interest was concerned, and therefore he followed it. And, no doubt from the same motive, had his interest lay the opposite way, Amaziah would have been as much alive to have pursued it. Alas! what is man!

3 Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established to him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father.

4 But he slew not their children, but *did as it is* written in the law in the book of Moses where the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin.

There was justice as well as suitable respect to the divine command in this preservation of the children of his father's murderers. The Lord had said this, Deut. xxiv. 16.

5 Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together, and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of *their* fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin: and he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them three hundred thousand choice *men, able* to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield.

If we compare the army of Judah as mentioned in this place, with the army as it stood in the days of Jehoshaphat, we find a sad decrease. See 2 Chron. xvii. 12—18. The whole of Jehoshaphat's subjects at that time were little less than six million, including men, women, and children. But this will be explained when we consider what are the sad consequences of sin. *The Lord turneth a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.* Psm. cvii. 34.

6 He hired also an hundred thousand mighty

men of valour out of Israel for an hundred talents of silver.

See, Reader, how prone man is to look to an arm of flesh, to any thing, rather than the Lord. And spiritually considered, doth not the believer do this when not living wholly upon Jesus?

7 But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the LORD *is* not with Israel, *to wit*, with all the children of Ephraim.

8 But if thou wilt go, do *it*, be strong for the battle: God shall make thee fall before the enemy: for God hath power to help, and to cast down.

9 And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The LORD is able to give thee much more than this.

10 Then Amaziah separated them, *to wit*, the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger.

11 ¶ And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people, and went to the valley of salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand.

12 And *other* ten thousand *left* alive did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they all were broken in pieces.

13 But the soldiers of the army which Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon, and smote three thousand of them, and took much spoil.

Observe how very gracious the Lord was, to send a message for safety.

to such a character as Amaziah. Yes! in the worst of times the Lord hath an eye to his people. *Nevertheless* (saith God) *I wrought for my name's sake.* Ezek. xx. 22. There is a blessed *nevertheless* whereby the Lord will look with mercy upon his people for his great name's sake, and for his covenant righteousness sake, with his dear Son. How beautiful a thought is introduced in the midst of this treaty between the man of God and the king; of God's all-sufficiency in making up all our losses which we at any time sustain in obeying his voice. Reader, do not fail to remark this as you go along. The indignation of the distressed army, and the revenge they took, may serve to teach us what dreadful effects break out among the carnal: potsherds striving with potsherds. Alas! did not the Lord restrain, what would be the bloodshed deluging the earth, from the proud, imperious, angry passions of man against man!

14 Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up *to be* his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them.

Was there ever a more glaring instance of wickedness and folly? He is permitted to scourge Edom for idolatry, and then sets up idols himself.

15 Wherefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?

16 And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that *the king* said unto him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear, why shouldest thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.

Wherein did Amaziah differ from his father? Joash did indeed kill Zechariah; but Amaziah would have done the same had not the prophet held his peace. Reader! do not fail to remark the awfulness of such characters.

17 ¶ Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us see one another in the face.

What advice could this be? Not of God, nor his prophets, for he had despised both.

18 And Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon, sent to the cedar that *was* in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that *was* in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.

19 Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites; and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home; why shouldest thou meddle to *thine* hurt, that thou shouldest fall, *even* thou, and Judah with thee?

20 But Amaziah would not hear; for it *came* of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of *their enemies*, because they sought after the gods of Edom.

21 So Joash the king of Israel went up; and they saw one another in the face, *both* he and Amaziah king of Judah, at Beth-shemesh, which *belongeth* to Judah.

22 And Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled every man to his tent.

23 And Joash the king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Jehohaz, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, four hundred cubits.

24 And *he took* all the gold and the silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-Edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria.

25 ¶ And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Joash son of Jehohaz king of Israel fifteen years.

26 Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, *are* they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel?

27 ¶ Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there.

28 And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

Much of this history we have 2 Kings xiv. But we shall do well to observe in the sad history of the termination of his life, what is said; *it came of God*. Yes! when sinners reject the counsel of God, it is against their own souls, how frequently are they made to do the very reverse of what they intend!

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought to pause over the view of such characters as Amaziah, and gather instruction from the very awful representation of the corrupt and fallen nature they afford. How in direct opposition to duty, to interest, to happiness, is all their conduct. Making a profession of godliness, but denying the power of it. At length breaking out in open rebellion, and closing life in all the bitterness of sorrow. How dreadfully painful are the embassies of faithful servants to such men; and how sure are their reproofs to bring upon them their hatred. But whether the *Amaziah*s of the present day will hear, or whether they will forbear, they must be found faithful. And however slighted, or despised, or even brought into peril by their integrity, still they are to go on *through evil report and good report*. The injuries they sustain God will recompense. He that despiseth them despiseth him that sent them. And in the end God will judge their cause, and bring forth their integrity as the light. Jesus looks on, and knows all. *He will come with vengeance, even God will come with a recompense.*

CHAP. XXVI.

CONTENTS.

This chapter contains the history of the reign of Uzziah. He invaded the office of the priesthood, and is smitten with leprosy. He dieth, and is succeeded by Jotham.

THEN all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who *was* sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah.

2 He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

3 Sixteen years old *was* Uzziah when he began

to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Jecoliah of Jerusalem.

4 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did.

5 And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.

We must interpret what is here said of Uzziah, in doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord, in the same sense as we did of Amaziah: that is, he kept up a form of religion in the land in opposition to idols. Not that he was a regenerate man, or had any vital godliness. The sequel of his life proves the reverse. His searching after God means his study of the things of God. Thousands in all ages have done this, whose knowledge hath been of the head and not of the heart. Of such God speaks in Zechariah, Zech. vii. 5, 6.

6 And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines.

7 And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Mehunims.

8 And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad *even* to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened *himself* exceedingly.

9 Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning *of the wall*, and fortified them.

10 Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen *also*, and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry.

11 Moreover Uzziah had an host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to

the number of their account by the hand of Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the ruler, under the hand of Hananiah, *one* of the king's captains.

12 The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour *were* two thousand and six hundred.

13 And under their hand *was* an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy.

14 And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to *cast* stones.

15 And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.

During the time that Uzziah favoured the service of the temple the Lord made his way prosperous in temporal things. This is the sense of what is meant by the Lord's helping him.

16 ¶ But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his* destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

17 And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, *that were* valiant men:

18 And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, *It appertaineth* not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron; that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither *shall it be* for thine honour from the LORD God.

19 Then Uzziah was wroth, and *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth

with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar.

20 And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests; looked upon him, and, behold, he *was* leproous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.

21 And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, *being* a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son *was* over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

22 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write.

23 So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which *belonged* to the kings; for they said, He *is* a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

We that live in gospel times can better conceive the cause of this awful visitation on Uzziah in invading the priests office. As the offering incense typified the Lord Jesus, because none but Jesus can approach Jehovah to make intercession, and to offer sacrifice, for the sins of the people; so the daring act of any going in themselves, with their own offering, implies a despising the way of salvation the Lord hath appointed. And who, in the present hour, is in this awful state, but the man who presumptuously draws nigh in his own righteousness, and makes light of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ? Such are under this dreadful leprosy of the soul, and live in a separate house, without God, and without Christ in the world. Lord! preserve men from this dangerous delusion!

REFLECTIONS.

HERE would I meditate over the wretched, ruined, and undone state of *Uzziah*. A leper to his grave. Cast out and forsaken both of God and man. Loathsome in the sight of both; and living and dying universally unpitied, unhelped, and unreclaimed. And are there any *Uzziah's* of the present hour? Do any count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of grace! how desperately lost to a real sense of their own state by nature? How totally unconscious of the infinitely precious value of the blood of Jesus; how wretchedly mis-

taken as to their own filth, corruption, lusts, and universal depravity. What strangers to themselves, to Jesus, to the necessity of the work of God upon the soul, and the absolute expediency of being washed from the leprosy of sin in the blood of Christ! blessed, thrice blessed God, who in mercy led me to see the preciousness of salvation, and as graciously led me to seek it in the way the Lord himself appointed. Never, blessed Jesus, may my soul invade thy office, but rejoice to come under the censer of thy righteousness. Oh! give me to see that I am indeed sheltered from the wrath to come, from the leprosy of this life, and the miseries of another, being found in thee and under thy precious all-atoning sacrifice, whereby thou hast for ever done away the sin and uncleanness of thy people.

CHAP. XXVII.

CONTENTS.

The reign of Jotham is recorded in this chapter. He obtains a victory over the Ammonites. He is succeeded by Ahaz.

JOTHAM was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok.

It may be proper to observe that the relation given in the Chronicles and in the book of Kings concerning this prince, is nearly one and the same. 2 Kings xv.

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly.

Though Jotham did not invade the priests office as his father had done, yet what is said of him concerning his doing right in the sight of the Lord, must be accepted much in the same sense as what was said of Uzziah. The people, it is said, did corruptly. I think it important that the Reader should be reminded that it was during this man's reign, and in the latter part of the reign of his father, that the prophet Isaiah flourished and delivered his prophecy, which he calls a vision. See Isaiah i. 1.

3 He built the high gate of the house of the LORD, and on the wall of Ophel he built much.

4 Moreover he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers.

5 ¶ He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an

hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second year and the third.

6 So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

7 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

8 He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

9 ¶ And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

Nothing particularly interesting, more than the common events in the records of the kings of Judah and Israel, meets us in these verses. That they lived, and fought, and built, and died, seems the great outline of their general character.—Let the Reader recollect the one great cause for which their history is preserved; namely, to lead in the succession of the line of David to Christ. It is this which makes the record precious: for this terminates not in an endless genealogy after *the law of a carnal commandment*, but in Jesus it is plainly *after the power of an endless life*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the quick succession of kings which this part of the word of God brings forward to view, it is profitable to pause and consider, how transient those characters were in their power and influence, which during their government, no doubt, made a mighty bustle in life, and moved up and down as beings highly important. But alas! what is all human greatness but as a bubble on the mighty waters! precious Jesus! what would the whole earth, with all its greatest monarchies and men be, void of an interest in thee and thy great salvation! How bounded within a short space their lives! how insignificant their existence! how trifling and childish their pursuits! Without thee, thou dear Redeemer, no hopes beyond the grave, no prospect of immortality; no redemption from sin; no resource from the fears of death, nor from the alarms of conscience! wishing to live after death, and yet dreading the hereafter; hoping there might be a place of rest; but in the midst full of a thousand forebodings concerning it! Oh! thou glorious, gracious, precious Jesus! it is thou which hast *brought life and immortality to light by thy gospel*. And by thy great undertaking thou hast not only opened to thy people clear and distinct views of the everlasting mansions of the blessed, but by thy finished redemption hast purchased eternal happiness for them, and art gone before to take possession of it in their name.

Now, Lord, we hail thy glorious person, and adore thee for thy finished work. All thy people are by thee made kings and priests to God and the Father. *We have received a kingdom by thee, and in thee, which cannot be moved.* Oh! for grace whereby we may serve thee acceptably in this life *with reverence and godly fear*; until we come to reign with thee in the life that is to come in glory for ever.

CHAP. XXVIII.

CONTENTS.

This chapter contains the history of the reign of Ahaz, and a melancholy relation of his wicked reign it furnisheth. He is afflicted by the Syrians. His death, and successor in the kingdom, is also related.

AHAZ was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father:

2 For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.

3 Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

4 He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

What a melancholy account is here given in a few verses of the life and conduct of Ahaz! had we not the authority of God's sacred word it would be incredible to read of the degeneracy both of king and people respecting idolatry. But Reader! what must have been the forbearance, mercy, and long suffering of the Lord. Oh! for grace to contemplate this with an eye to Jesus!

5 Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought *them* to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

6 For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day,

which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.

7 And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah *that was* next to the king.

8 And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria.

Both Syrians and Israelites shall become instruments in the hand of God when the Lord will punish Judah. And in the private afflictions of God's people the severity of our trials is doubly increased when it comes from a quarter where we least expected. When *a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*

9 But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name *was* Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage *that reacheth up unto heaven.*

10 And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: *but are there* not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God.

11 Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD *is upon you.*

Was it not most gracious in God to send this message to the sinners in Israel? And was not the man of God most faithful in the delivery of it! Here is no congratulation of their victory, but reproof and an alarming assurance of the Lord's displeasure in consequence of their sins!

12 Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son

of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war,

13 And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD *already*, ye intend to add *more* to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and *there is* fierce wrath against Israel.

14 So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation.

15 And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

I feel delight in the perusal of those verses in that they plainly manifest the grace of the Lord had not totally departed from Israel. Certain persons among them still felt the sovereign grace of the Lord. How precious is it to behold that in the worst of times, *there is* (as the apostle expresses it) *a remnant according to the election of grace*. Rom. xi. 5.

16 At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.

17 For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives.

18 The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnath with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.

19 For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD.

It is hardly possible to read this account of Ahaz's distress, and behold

at the same time the sad cause of all in his multiplied and aggravated transgressions, without being struck with a renewed conviction of the hardness and impenitent state of the heart under sin. Though he had made Judah naked, and the Lord had brought Judah low; yet we hear of no remorse, no sorrow, no desire in the heart of Ahaz to turn to the Lord; nay, we only find the poor wretch hardening himself in his wickedness, and looking to Assyria, to any power in short but the right power, even to the Lord, to deliver him out of his affliction. But Reader! is Ahaz's case singular? Is not this the conduct of all sinners until grace reclaims them!

20 And Tilgath-pilnezer king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.

21 For Ahaz took away a portion *out* of the house of the LORD, and *out* of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave *it* unto the king of Assyria; but he helped him not.

22 And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: *this is that* king Ahaz.

23 For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, *therefore* will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.

24 And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

25 And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.

Observe the progression of sin when the mind is hardened under its influence. You see Ahaz robs God's house to purchase man's arm against him; sacrificeth to devils to gain human interest. And thus goeth on from bad to worse, until the measure of his iniquity is full. And observe, Reader! for it is an observation highly proper to be connected with it, how disappointment, vexation, and ruin, accompany the steps of such transgressors. The king of Assyria takes his gifts but laughs at his calamity. Such invariably is the friendship of sinners in every instance. And as Ahaz's distresses and disappointments increased,

so his sins multiplied, and he transgressed yet more against the Lord. And do remark how the Holy Ghost hath branded for ever his character in those few words; *This is that king Ahaz*. As if the Lord meant thereby to make his memorial detested for ever.

26 ¶ Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

27 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, *even* in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel: And Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

The mind feels relief when arriving at the close of such an history and such a character. I cannot dismiss the relation of this impious prince's life without desiring the Reader to compare it with the seventh chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah; in the perusal of which he will discover, not only the graciousness of the Lord in sending to his people, even during the reign of so wicked a prince, a renewed instance of his love; but opening to the views of the faithful in Judah blessed intimations of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It forms a most precious consolation to every one to consider that at a time when *sin abounded* *grace did much* more abound; for never during the Old Testament days were there afforded clearer promises concerning Jesus than the prophecy of Isaiah contained; and delivered at a time when the most daring rebellion against God marked both Israel and Judah.

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE! my soul, over the perusal of this chapter, and in the conduct of Ahaz behold the lost, depraved, hardened, and wretched state of human nature. See, my soul, to what sin hath reduced every man? and remark also how deluded to his own ruin is the sinner, who, when the Lord is coming forth as his enemy, is vainly looking to an arm of flesh to become his friend; as if a man would set the briars and thorns against Jehovah in battle! But while contemplating man's worthlessness, oh! for grace to admire and adore God's faithfulness. Was it not enough, oh! thou most gracious Lord, that immediately upon the fall of man redemption was promised; and that from age to age thou shouldst send thy servants to keep alive the remembrance of this unspeakable mercy promised in the minds of thy people; but that, at a period when they were all sinning with an high hand, and living as if regardless of all thy love, that then thou shouldst magnify the exceeding riches of thy grace, and then commission thy servant the prophet to tell Ahaz that redemption was approaching, and Emmanuel should appear as the son of the virgin. Lord! help me to adore, to magnify, to rightly understand and prize those depths, and heights, and breadths, and lengths, of such peerless, matchless love! And Lord, amidst all the unworthiness, and coldness, and deadness, and undeservings of my heart, let such views of thy grace

comfort and refresh my soul. Yes! thou blessed Jesus, thou precious Emmanuel, amidst all my sorrows let me derive my highest consolation from my interest in thee, my relation to thee, my hopes and expectations from thee, and my whole salvation of thee, the Lord my righteousness. Thou art indeed *Emmanuel*, God with us, God in us the hope of glory.

CHAP. XXIX.

CONTENTS.

The subject of this chapter is the chronicle of the reign of Hezekiah. He restoreth the true worship of God, and cleanseth the Lord's house.

HEZEKIAH began to reign *when he was* five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.

We may have reference to the recital of the reign of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xvi. and a very interesting account we have of a part of it, Isaiah xxxvi. and 3 following chapters.

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.

3 ¶ He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.

4 And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street,

5 And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy *place*.

6 For our fathers have trespassed, and done *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned *their* backs.

7 Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burn-

ed incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel.

8 Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.

9 For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives *are* in captivity for this.

10 Now *it is* in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.

11 My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense.

His address to his people in the very opening of his government implies that his soul had been grieved for the dreadful conduct of his father during his minority. Reader! how evident it is that grace is not hereditary. How many a graceless father hath had a gracious son! and how many a gracious father a graceless child. What a contrast is here between Ahaz and Hezekiah!

12 ¶ Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites: and of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehalelel: and of the Gershonites; Joash the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Joah:

13 And of the sons of Elizaphan; Shimri, and Jeiel: and of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah, and Mattaniah:

14 And of the sons of Heman; Jehiel, and Shimei: and of the sons of Jeduthun; Shemaiah, and Uzziel.

15 And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD.

16 And the priests went into the inner part of

the house of the LORD, to cleanse *it*, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took *it*, to carry *it* out abroad into the brook Kidron.

17 Now they began on the first *day* of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days: and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end.

18 Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread table, with all the vessels thereof.

19 Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they are before the altar of the LORD.

The purification of the house of the Lord may serve to remind us of the yet more infinitely important work of God the Holy Ghost in his cleansing work of the heart by his power.—What a sweet scripture that is to this effect; *When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughter of Zion with the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning.* Isaiah iv. 4. Reader! seek for those precious effects in your own soul. Have you the spirit of judgment to enlighten the understanding in the knowledge of Jesus? And have you the spirit of burning to make your heart burn within you while Jesus draweth nigh in making himself known by the way and opening the soul to the apprehension of the scriptures?

20 Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD.

21 And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer *them* on the altar of the LORD.

22 So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar.

23 And they brought forth the he goats *for* the sin offering before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them:

24 And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded *that* the burnt offering and the sin offering *should be made* for all Israel.

25 And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad, the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for *so was* the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.

26 And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

27 And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began *also* with the trumpets, and with the instruments *ordained* by king David of Israel.

28 And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: *and all this continued* until the burnt offering was finished.

29 And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped.

30 Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the

LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

It is astonishing to observe in this solemn service what an eye to Jesus and his salvation this whole service had. Here was the sin-offering; and Christ, *who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* Here was the king and the people laying their hands upon the goats, as an intimation that their sins were to be laid upon the sacrifice. And were not the sins of the people all laid upon Jesus when Jehovah laid on him *the iniquities of us all?* Isaiah. liii. 6.

31 Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings.

32 And the number of the burnt offerings, which the congregation brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, an hundred rams, *and* two hundred lambs; all these *were* for a burnt offering to the LORD.

33 And the consecrated things *were* six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep.

34 But the priests were too few, so that they could not slay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the *other* priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites *were* more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests.

35 And also the burnt offerings *were* in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and the drink offerings for *every* burnt offering. So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order.

36 And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was *done* suddenly.

How beautiful and interesting to behold the joy both of king and people in the view they now had of the house of God being cleansed;

and that peace being made with God, they had now free access to the temple service as heretofore. But Reader! how infinitely more beautiful is this subject considered as typical and figurative, with an eye to Jesus. *Having peace with God (saith an apostle) in the blood of his cross, we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Rom. v. 1, 2. Seen with an eye to gospel times, and to gospel mercies in Jesus, how truly interesting the Old Testament church history appears, and how evidently the whole proves that it was God prepared the people, and that God the Spirit hereby glorified Christ Jesus.

REFLECTIONS.

How beautiful the face of things appears in Judah under the reign of Hezekiah, compared to the deplorable state in which we behold it under the reign of his father Ahaz. And oh! how much the conduct of men in power, and in exalted stations, operates upon all the inferior departments, both in church and state. But chiefly, my soul, let the improvements which arise out of this chapter tend to lead thee to the precious Jesus. And conceive how infinitely interesting and important must be that salvation of his, which was so uniformly made in all ages of the church the great means and end of purification, unto which, by faith, the people all directed their religious services. Oh! thou blessed reconciler, *who hast made our peace in the blood of thy cross!* by virtue of thy atoning blood and righteousness it is, that after all our unworthiness and the setting up of idols in our hearts, we are like the house of Judah under Hezekiah, again consecrated unto the Lord to approach in the name and the rich sacrifice of Jesus. Thou art the author and finisher, the means and the end, the sum and substance of all consolation to thy church, both militant and triumphant, by peace here and glory hereafter. Hail! blessed Jesus! *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength; thou art my song of rejoicing all the day, for thou art become my salvation.*

CHAP. XXX.

CONTENTS.

This chapter relates the continuance of Hezekiah's good reign. He proclaims a passover. The people are earnest in destroying the idols.

AND Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel.

2 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month.

3 For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

4 And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation.

5 So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done *it* of a long time *in such sort* as it was written.

It should seem that in consequence of the general defection of the people from the worship of the Lord, the holy service of the passover had not been punctually observed. And at the time when Hezekiah set up this reform in the opening of his reign the season of the paschal feast was over. Unwilling to let so refreshing a service pass by until another year, the king availed himself of a permission in the law which was made for persons under uncleanness, that when by reason of this they could not observe it at its proper season, they might keep it in the *second* month instead of the first. Numb. ix. 10, 11. The king therefore having taken counsel on this subject, and it meeting the general approbation both of the princes and the congregation, the celebration of the passover was determined upon. Reader! what a superiority in point of privilege are we of the gospel church called to, in that we have our holy supper, in commemoration of Christ our passover sacrificed for us every month, and if occasion offers, every day, and like the primitive church may *daily in the temple, or from house to house*, be engaged in the sweet service of *breaking of bread and of prayer*. Yes! dearest Jesus! thy people whom thou hast made kings and priests to God and the Father, are supposed to be daily carrying about in their body *the dying of the Lord Jesus!* Acts ii. 46. 2 Cor. iv. 10.

6 So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.

7 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD

God of their fathers, *who* therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see.

8 Now be ye not stiff necked, as your fathers *were*, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.

9 For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children *shall find* compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God *is* gracious and merciful, and will not turn away *his* face from you, if ye return unto him.

I admire the conduct of Hezekiah on this occasion. He not only invites his own subjects of Judah, but *all* Israel. For both Israel and Judah had alike revolted; and a return to the Lord God of their fathers was as much the duty and interest of Israel as of Judah.

10 So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.

11 Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.

How awful a state was Israel now in! if the Reader makes a calculation of time he will discover that this happened not above two or three years, at the most, before the captivity of Israel by the king of Assyria. Hence their hearts were infatuated and blinded to their ruin. It is refreshing, however, amidst this general depravity, to observe that there were some whose hearts were inclined to seek the Lord. Hosea was king of Israel at this time; but it doth not appear that he either accepted the king of Judah's invitation himself to go to Jerusalem at this passover, or that he forbade any of his subjects from going.

12 Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD.

This is a beautiful account of Judah; and their unanimity on this solemn occasion. No doubt the thing was of the Lord. Oh! dearest Jesus! how sweet is it when thy churches, like that of old, are of one heart and one soul; all striving for the faith of the gospel. Acts iv. 32.

13 ¶ And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation.

14 And they arose and took away the altars that *were* in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast *them* into the brook Kidron.

What a beautiful representation is here made of the church. Who but must have prayed for the sanctifying influence of the divine presence in such an assembly?

15 Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day* of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the LORD.

16 And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood, *which they received* of the hand of the Levites.

17 For *there were* many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for every one *that was* not clean, to sanctify *them* unto the LORD.

18 For a multitude of the people, *even* many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar; and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one

19 *That* prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though *he be* not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.

20 And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.

There are several most interesting things observable upon this occasion. The people first put away all the idolatrous altars before they proceeded to their pure worship. The old leaven of malice and wickedness must be put away by the followers of the Lord Jesus be-

fore they keep the feast of unleavened bread on the body and blood of Christ. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. The sprinkling of the blood, according to the original institution, plainly shews that amidst the long dreadful reign of idolatry there were some precious souls who by faith looked to the blood of sprinkling in Jesus. Heb. xii. 24. The zeal of many upon this occasion outdoing the priests and Levites, is a delightful testimony also that the Lord had a seed alive in the midst of that degenerate nation, which though to the eye of men unknown like as it was in the days of Elijah, yet to the Lord were known, and by the Lord reserved from the general corruption. Rom. xi. 3, 4. The unseasonable appointment of this passover which necessity had induced, and the quickness with which it was brought forward after it was determined upon, not allowing space for the usual preparation, the king implored the Lord to pardon, and to accept the people according to what they had, and not what they had not. And the Lord's gracious attention to the king's prayer and healing the people; these things, beheld with an eye to Jesus, are sweet gospel blessings veiled under these law dispensations. Reader! do not overlook your own personal concern in this. After all your preparations what sanctification is there in your best prayers and services. Need not the holiest of men to cry out, *The good Lord pardon every one?* Oh! how precious, how infinitely precious, is the thought, that the same worth, the same sin-atoning efficacy is in the Lamb that was slain, though there be new guilt and new defilement in our hearts and in our poor services, from day to day. The virtue and merits of Jesus's blood become the sanctification and cause of acceptance of his people for ever.

21 And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, *singing* with loud instruments unto the LORD.

22 And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD: and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers.

23 And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept *other* seven days with gladness.

24 For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves.

25 And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced.

26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel *there was* not the like in Jerusalem.

27 Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came *up* to his holy dwelling place, *even* unto heaven.

This feast, agreeable to the original appointment by Moses, followed up the holy service of the passover. And the joy of the people, of all ranks and orders among them, can better be conceived than expressed. It may serve to shew the holy joy that is in the heart of one poor sinner in an house, in a family, in a nation or kingdom, when a real conversion takes place in the soul, and amity and friendship, are again restored between heaven and earth. Then every thing is sanctified. The most ordinary enjoyments are sanctified. When the Lord hath blessed a soul with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; he blesses him in making a covenant with every thing and every creature, both in his basket and in his store. Reader! if Jesus be yours, all things are yours. *He that overcometh* (saith Jesus himself) *shall inherit all things; and I will be his God; and he shall be my son.* Rev. xxi. 7. *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works.* Eccles ix. 7, 8. The garment the sinner wears of Jesus's righteousness is always white; and his head lacks no ointment, because the Holy Ghost sheds abroad his grace abundantly upon him in Christ Jesus. Hosea. ii. 18—20. Observe in this account of the close of this great festival how the priests blessed the people. Long neglected as this divine service had been, even from the days of Solomon, yet the form appointed by the Lord (see Numb. vi. 22, &c.) had not been forgotten. Oh! how sweet is it to bless the people in the joint name of the Father, Son and Spirit. And how sure is it when done by his authority, that the blessing pronounced on earth will be confirmed in heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! while we pay all due respect to this beautiful piece of history in the church, and find cause to bless God for raising up his servant Hezekiah in such a time for the recovery of the land from idols, let you and I have our thoughts exercised in the contemplation of the mercies we are called to in the free, and full, and seasonable enjoyment of our gospel ordinances under the rich profusion of the means of grace the Lord our God hath reserved to us. Are we as a nation, as a people, better than our fathers? Have we merited the blessings we possess in

our hallowed things? Are we not gone away in a thousand instances from his sacred word, from the love of his truth, from the grand distinguishing doctrines of the gospel; from the love of ordinances and from a well-grounded confidence in him? And doth the Lord amidst all our provocations, still preserve to us those best of all privileges, our sacred things, our sabbaths; his holy word and ordinances. Oh then, let the example of Hezekiah and his people stir us up to an earnest, hearty, and sincere return to the Lord. Let us send out missionaries to the various kingdoms of the earth, as he did his posts to Israel, and invite all ranks and orders of people to come to Jesus. And oh! let our return to the Lord be with an eye to the person, blood, and righteousness of Jesus. He is our passover, he is our peace, our propitiation, our altar, our sacrifice, our righteousness, our all. Yes! blessed Jesus! thou art divinely prepared and graciously furnished by God our Father, a suited Saviour for fallen, sinful men. Sweetly and secretly in thy person are hid *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*: and in thy finished work the life, safety, present peace, and everlasting happiness of thy people is contained. Lord! to whom shall we go but unto thee, *thou hast the words of eternal life*. Thou art our passover sacrificed for us. In thee, and on thee, we would keep an everlasting feast. And oh! do thou bless us as a High Priest of our calling, and may our God and Father answer it, and confirm it in heaven his dwelling place, the habitation of his holiness and his glory.

CHAP. XXXI.

CONTENTS.

The prosecution of Hezekiah's history is carried on in this chapter. He puts down the remains of idolatry. The character of Hezekiah in his sincerity is briefly spoken of.

NOW when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned, every man to his possession, into their own cities.

This chapter opens in a delightful account of what followed the great festival Hezekiah and the people had observed. Reader! I know not what *your* view of things may be; but I confess that I love to see the Lord's days followed up with gracious days through the week. It is a pity, methinks, when the sabbath is past that the impressions of it should be over. Ought not the sweet savor of the sanctuary to be as ointment poured forth in all we say or do; that the world as well as our own hearts may know that *we have been with Jesus*? The captivity of

Israel and Judah, in this one case of destroying the remains of idolatry, became a convincing proof how sincere they were in what they had embarked. I do not presume to say as much, but yet I venture to think that this remnant of Israel, which came up to Judah upon this solemn occasion, were led there by the Lord; and if so, were of the Lord's secret ones preserved amidst the rubbish hastening to captivity. It is worthy the Reader's observation, that the prophet Isaiah who ministered during the reign of Hezekiah, as well as before him, spake of this destruction of idols. And though no doubt the great feature of this man's prediction painted gospel times, yet not without an eye to the present circumstances also. Isaiah ii. 20.

2 And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the LORD.

3 *He appointed* also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, *to wit*, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as *it is* written in the law of the LORD.

4 Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD.

5 And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all *things* brought they in abundantly.

6 And *concerning* the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid *them* by heaps.

7 In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished *them* in the seventh month.

8 And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD, and his people Israel.

9 Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.

10 And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since *the people* began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left *is* this great store.

11 ¶ Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared *them*,

12 And brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated *things* faithfully: over which Cononiah the Levite *was* ruler, and Shimei his brother *was* the next.

13 And Jehiel, and Azaziah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, *were* overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God.

14 And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter toward the east, *was* over the freewill offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the LORD, and the most holy things.

15 And next him *were* Eden, and Miniamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priests, in *their* set office, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small;

16 Beside their genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, *even* unto every one that entereth into the house of the LORD, his daily portion for their service in their charges according to their courses:

17 Both to the genealogy of the priests by the house of their fathers, and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses;

18 And to the genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness.

19 Also of the sons of Aaron the priest, *which were* in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city, the men that were expressed by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites.

The liberal supply which both the king and people made for the maintenance of the priests and Levites, is another proof how much the service of the sanctuary lay in the hearts of the people. Those only can have a real sense of the value of ordinances who have been deprived of them. I cannot pass over this long account of the liberality of the people towards their priests, without remarking the grateful conduct of Azariah the chief priest upon the occasion. We have not only had enough to eat (said he) but we have left plenty. It were devoutly to be wished that while the people are liberal to their ministers, all ministers were liberal to them. An idle priest is of all characters the most odious. And what Paul hath said of men in general, ought in a most special manner to be followed up in law concerning the supposed servants of the sanctuary; *If any will not work neither should he eat* 2 Thess. iii. 10.

20 ¶ And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought *that which was* good and right and truth before the Lord his God.

21 And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did *it* with all his heart, and prospered.

This is but a short account of Hezekiah's character, yet is it a very precious one. What he did was with a single eye to the glory of God. Reader! it is a great thing to have a heart not divided. Few know what this means. The Lord gives an account what it means when he saith concerning Israel; *He is an empty vine; he bringeth forth fruit unto himself; their heart is divided.* Hosea x. 1, 2.

REFLECTIONS.

I PASS over several otherwise interesting reflections which this chapter ministereth unto in the zeal of Hezekiah and the people to put idolatry out of the land, in order to attend to what the Holy Ghost hath here so largely dwelt upon, the liberality of the people providing for their clergy, and the faithfulness of the clergy in the moderate use of the good things of God's providence, and their zeal and services in the Lord's work among the people. In whatever character the ministers of Jesus are considered as servants and labourers, as watchmen or stewards, they are uniformly held forth as exercising a most solemn and awful office, for the faithful account of which they are responsible at the judgment-seat of God. *We watch* (saith one of them, well taught in divine things) *for your souls, as they that must give account, that we may do it with joy, and not with grief.* Called to the great work and labor of the ministry; solemnly engaged in it; intrusted by the Lord with the charge of his word, his people, his house, his ordinances, and family; the grand object should be how to promote his glory in the salvation of men; and by every means in their power to win souls unto Christ. Every faithful servant is bound to advance his Lord's interests. How much more every faithful servant of Jesus, in that the salvation of the souls of poor perishing sinners is so intimately connected with the glory of his master. Oh! Lord Jesus! do thou in compassion to the perishing state of sinners all around, call such to thy service whose hearts, like thine own, may be moved with compassion in the contemplation of a lost world. And to those whom thou hast called, or shalt call, be pleased to give the sweet communications of thy Holy Spirit. Make them more anxious to win souls to Jesus than to win kingdoms to themselves. And let the same gracious frame of mind mark all thy sent servants, which the apostle Paul felt when he could and did appeal to his people, and say, *I will not be burdensome to you, for I seek not yours, but you.* 2 Cor. xii. 14.

CHAP. XXXII.

CONTENTS.

In this chapter we arrive in point of history to the close of Hezekiah's life and reign. He meets with a sharp trial in the approach of the Assyrian army. His sickness and death. Manasseh his son succeeds him in the throne.

AFTER these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself.

We have the history of this war so much more fully related in the 2 Kings xviii. and xix. chapters, that I shall have only to notice some

few points not mentioned there, and then refer the Reader wholly to that account both in the sacred text and in the commentary. There is a great beauty in the opening of this chapter, concerning the exercise of the minds of Hezekiah and his people by this Assyrian. *After these things and the establishment thereof*; that is, after Hezekiah had thus cleansed the sanctuary and the land of idolatry. In the first view of things one might have thought, that now he and his people would have sat down under the blessing of the Lord, and all would be peace and happiness. Reader! do not fail to mark from it that God's people must be an exercised people. Our Lord's motto, which all his soldiers should wear in their banner is, *In the world ye shall have tribulation. In me ye shall have peace.* John xvi. 33.

2 And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem,

3 He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which *were* without the city: and they did help him:

4 So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?

5 Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised *it* up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo *in* the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.

6 And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying,

7 Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that *is* with him: for *there be* more with us than with him:

8 With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

This is an interesting account of the plan Hezekiah pursued against the invader; and which is not related to us in the parallel history in the book of the Kings. But what I most admire is Hezekiah's faith in the Lord, and by which he animated the minds of his people. Reader! it is one of the highest acts of faith to lean upon Jesus as the Father's salvation, when matters are most unpromising in ourselves.

9 After this did Sennacherib king of Assyria send his servants to Jerusalem, (but he *himself* laid siege against Lachish, and all his power with him) unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto all Judah that *were* at Jerusalem, saying,

It is remarkable that about this time great revolutions were accomplishing in the earth. Rome, the mistress of the world as she afterwards became, was about this period built by *Romulus*, of whom profane historians speak so largely; and which indeed I should not have mentioned in this place, but for the part which the church of God in the days of our Lord had to do with it. Rome at this time begun in its infancy. Seven hundred years after she was arrived at her plenitude, when the Lord Jesus Christ was born.

10 Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem?

11 Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, The LORD our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

12 Hath not the same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall worship before one altar, and burn incense upon it?

13 Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of *other* lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of mine hand?

14 Who *was there* among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of mine hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand?

15 Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you,

nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him: for no God of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, and out of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand?

16 And his servants spake yet *more* against the LORD God, and against his servant Hezekiah.

17 He wrote also letters to rail on the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of *other* lands have not delivered their people out of mine hand, so shall not the god of Hezekiah deliver his people out of mine hand.

18 Then they cried with a loud voice in the Jew's speech unto the people of Jerusalem that *were* on the wall, to affright them, and to trouble them; that they might take the city.

19 And they spake against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth, *which were* the work of the hands of man.

20 And for this *cause* Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven.

21 ¶ And the LORD sent an angel which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword.

22 Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all *other*, and guided them on every side.

23 And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.

By this time Israel had been carried away captive. And Sennacherib thought to do the same by Judah. The Holy Ghost hath considered this part of the church's history so important, as to cause three records to be made of it. In the 2nd book of the Kings, chap. xviii. 19. in this place of the Chronicles; and by the prophecy of Isaiah, chap. xxxvi. —xxix. Let the Reader remark the mighty contrast between the horrid blasphemy and the impiety of Sennacherib and his army, and the piety and faith of Hezekiah and his people. And let the Reader mark the sequel in the deliverance of his servants, and the total ruin of his foes.

24 ¶ In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign.

We have here the Lord's servant under another trial, that of sickness. Sweet are all the exercises of God's people when sanctified. The event of this is more particularly related, 2 Kings xx. Isaiah xxxviii.

25 But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit *done* unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

26 Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, *both* he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

27 And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels;

28 Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks.

29 Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much.

30 This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper water course of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

31 Howbeit in *the business of* the ambassadors of

the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was *done* in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all *that was* in his heart.

The Holy Ghost hath been pleased to give us in those Chronicles the most interesting account concerning Hezekiah in the causes of his trials, and which the other records, though relating the historical part more copiously, have not done. The grand design was to shew Hezekiah what was in his heart. The miracle God had wrought in the dial of Ahaz, suffered to go back so many degrees, was the wonder done in the land. And as the Assyrians foolishly worshipped the sun, probably Hezekiah vaunted himself not a little on this account. Be this as it may, certain it is, that the Lord thus humbled his servant, in order to bring him acquainted with the real state of his heart, as it was in the sight of God. Reader! do not let this part of Hezekiah's history pass before you without your making the suitable improvements from it. What doth it shew but this, that all men, the best of men, are but men full of infirmities, and nothing to boast of before God. Oh! precious Jesus! whenever we look, to whomsoever we direct our researches, where shall we find any but thee that art holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and without guile?

32 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they *are* written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

33 And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

Here's the end of Hezekiah, which forms the final end of all. *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. But the memory of the just is blessed!*

REFLECTIONS.

So royal a character as Hezekiah, and especially after the view we have had before of his father Ahaz, demands our thankfulness to the God of our mercies, who maketh one to differ from another, and by his grace forms all the difference between the precious and the vile. And while we look at Hezekiah, let us not overlook all the offspring of Jesus, our almighty king. Is it not he that hath begotten us to this royal state, and made all his children kings and priests to God and the Father! Think, believer, what an honoured, what a royal state you are *new born* to in Christ Jesus! he hath made us (saith an apostle) *par-*

takers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. You are called to a princely service also; for his service is perfect freedom. And how noble is the clothing of the king's daughter, which is all glorious within. How royal their state; how truly kingly their dignity, which are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Hail! thou holy, blessed, royal Lord Jesus! by whose compleat salvation we are thus begotten to the privilege of children of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Oh! for grace to live up to our high and glorious privileges. Beloved! now are we the sons of God! and it doth not appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure. 1 John iii. 1, 2.

CHAP. XXXIII.

CONTENTS.

We enter in this chapter upon the history of the reign of Manasseh; and a most wicked reign it proved. He is carried into Babylon. In prison his heart is changed. He is liberated from prison. At his death he is succeeded by Ammon his son. He dies also, and Josiah his son becomes his successor.

MANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem :

2 But did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them:

4 Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever.

5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a fami-

liar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

7 And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:

8 Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses.

9 So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, *and* to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

10 And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.

We had this history of Manasseh before, and with so little variety, that I think it unnecessary to dwell upon it. See 2 Kings xxi. Never, surely, was there a record more painful to go over. What an awful picture doth this man hold forth of the desperately wicked state of the human heart?

11 ¶ Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

12 ¶ And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

13 And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he *was* God.

14 Now after this he built a wall without the

city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.

The most remarkable circumstance here related is, that the change wrought upon Manasseh is not so much as mentioned in the parallel history in Kings. It hath afforded great comfort, and no doubt encouragement, to many a sinner. And therefore probably the Holy Ghost thought proper to have it recorded. Reader! let you and I make this use of it, and behold in it what grace can do; what mercy there is in God; what efficacy in the blood and righteousness of Jesus; and what power in the work of God the Holy Ghost. Here, surely, that sweet scripture was fully proved, *where sin abounded grace did much more abound*. Rom. v. 20. And however high and aggravated the transgressions of our nature are, almighty grace will yet as infinitely transcend our offences as the heavens are higher than the earth.

15 And he took away the strange gods and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast *them* out of the city.

16 And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings, and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.

17 Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, *yet* unto the LORD their God only.

18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they *are written* in the book of the kings of Israel.

19 His prayer also, and *how God* was intreated of him, and all his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they *are written* among the sayings of the seers.

20 So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they

buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

There is a prayer among the books of the apocrypha said to be this prayer of Manasseh. But the matter is questionable. Happy is it to observe, that a life which begun so unpromising, did yet find mercy from the Lord.

21 ¶ Amon *was* two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem.

22 But he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them;

23 And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.

24 And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house.

25 ¶ But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

The short, sinful, and unworthy life of Amon, terminating as it did by a violent death, opens but little subject for meditation. Alas! how wretched and hopeless for the most part are all such men. How hath the Psalmist marked them, and how true a portrait hath he drawn. *Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.* Psalm xxxvii. 10.

REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! in the contemplation of such characters as are here represented, behold the awful situation of the wicked. How by sin they destroy themselves, ruin their friends, involve their dearest connections in evil, and beginning in sin, for the most part terminate their existence in vanity and vexation of spirit. But think, my soul, what a miracle of grace must it be, when any like Manasseh are delivered out of the snare of the devil, *who were taken captive by him at his will.* Surely none will venture to dispute here the sovereignty of grace, or to put that down to man's free will which can belong to none but the undeserved, unsought for, unexpected, mercy of God in Christ. And hast thou, Lord, brought my soul out of the prison house, out of Satan's empire; and washed me from my sins in thy blood! hast thou made me a rich

partaker of the grace which is in Christ Jesus! Oh! blessed, for ever blessed, be the means in affliction like Manasseh's, and yet more blessed be the God of the means, who remembered me in my low estate, *for his mercy endureth for ever.*

CHAP. XXXIV.

CONTENTS.

This chapter brings us acquainted with the reign of Josiah. He destroyeth idolatry; repaireth the temple; the book of the law being found in the house of the Lord, Josiah causeth it to be read. The king reneweth the covenant.

JOSIAH *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years.

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined *neither* to the right hand, nor to the left.

The parallel history of this we have, 2 Kings xxiii. to which I refer the Reader, and for shortness sake shall only call the attention of the Reader to such points in the history as were not noticed in that.

3 ¶ For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.

4 And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images that *were* on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust *of them*, and strowed *it* upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.

5 And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.

6 And *so did he* in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphthali, with their mattocks round about.

7 And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

The younger part of his reign no doubt was agreeable to his childhood, but very tender and imperfect in divine things; yet what an interesting account the Holy Ghost hath given of Josiah, in that while he was yet young we are told, he began to seek after the God of David his father. What an unspeakable mercy it is, and I cannot forego the opportunity which here presents itself of noticing it, that in this land of bibles our children are from their youngest years taught, as far as the outward teaching of the scriptures can lead, the things which concern the Lord God of our fathers. O thou Holy Spirit! whose gracious office it is to illumine the understanding within; do thou condescend to be the Almighty teacher of our youth, and let the rising generation be a seed to seek the Lord, and to serve the Lord from their earliest years.

8 ¶ Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.

I admire the expression, the Lord *his* God. As if it meant to say, that young as Josiah was, he had now acquired a knowledge of his own personal interest in the covenant of the Lord. And what was this but the covenant of redemption in Jesus? Gen. xii. 3. The Holy Ghost hath expressly shewn this, when he saith by his servant the apostle, that the gospel was then preached unto Abraham when he said, *in thee* (that is) *in thy seed*, and which seed is Christ, *shall all nations be blessed*. Gal. iii. 8. ii. 16.

9 And when they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin; and they returned to Jerusalem.

10 And they put *it* in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the LORD, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the LORD, to repair and amend the house:

11 Even to the artificers and builders gave they *it*, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed.

12 And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them *were* Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set *it* forward; and *other of* the Levites, all that could skill of instruments of musick.

13 Also *they were* over the bearers of burdens, and *were* overseers of all that wrought the work in any manner of service: and of the Levites *there were* scribes, and officers, and porters.

I admire the fidelity and honesty of those workmen who did the work faithfully, and with whom the money was intrusted. How delightful a thing it is to have gracious men about us, in whom we can confide. Well might David say, *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me.* Psm. ci. 6.

14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiab the priest found a book of the law of the LORD given by Moses.

15 And Hilkiab answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiab delivered the book to Shaphan.

16 And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do *it*.

17 And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiab the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

19 And it came to pass, when the king had

heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

20 And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying,

21 Go, enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book.

22 And Hilkiah, and *they* that the king *had appointed*, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college :) and they spake to her to that *effect*.

23 And she answered them, thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me,

24 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, *even* all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah:

25 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched.

26 And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel *concerning* the words which thou hast heard;

27 Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst

humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard *thee* also, saith the LORD.

28 Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

29 ¶ Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

30 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.

31 And the king stood in his place, and made covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

32 And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand *to it*. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

33 And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that *pertained* to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, *even* to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

The relation here given so much corresponds to what was before related, 2 Kings, that I think it necessary only to direct the Reader to look back, and consult what was there said, in our humble commentary upon it. I would only in addition remark, that if the discovery

of the book of the *law* produced such effects upon the minds of the king and the people, what ought the perpetual use of the book of the *gospel* to have upon the minds of men in the present day? Surely we shall be of all men most inexcusable if we neglect so great salvation. Reader! how stands the word of God in your estimation, and what are the effects wrought in your heart from the perusal of it! Is it your meditation all the day; and can you say as one of old did, *Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate on thy word.* Psm. cxix. 148. How delightful a view have we of the prophet in his love of God's word, when he said, *thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.* Jerem. xv. 16.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let our improvement of this chapter, under the Spirit's teaching, be to remark from the early call of Josiah to the knowledge of the Lord God of his fathers, the blessedness of those who are brought betimes to a saving view of the Lord Jesus Christ, and redemption in his blood. It is an unspeakable mercy, no doubt, and a miracle of grace, at any period, and at any time, when souls are truly converted to Jesus. The laborers in the vineyard at the sixth, and ninth, and eleventh hour, which were called and equally recompensed in the close of the day, give us a rich representation of the free, sovereign grace of our most compassionate and gracious Father. Surely it is a very glorious proof of the sovereignty of God's love and mercy, when we behold men in the meridian of life, and in the midst of all their pursuits of business, or of worldly pleasure, taken aside by the kind hand of the Lord, and brought to the knowledge and love of Jesus. And surely the grace of God is magnified in the conversion of old sinners, who are grown old in sin as well as years, and yet the long current and tide of their affections is made to turn at the command of his voice, who raiseth the dead in trespasses and sins. But we behold with peculiar loveliness the grace the Lord bestows on those whose tender years are seasoned with the love of Jesus. Reader! how doth your experience correspond with either? Hath Jesus, the morning star, risen upon *your* soul? Hath Jesus the day spring from on high visited *you*? Can you trace your knowledge of this light and life of man, like Josiah, from your youth? Oh! the unspeakable felicity of knowing him from a child, and becoming acquainted with Jesus from our earliest years? What can equal that joy of the soul arising out of the Lord's manifestation, when speaking to a believer, as he did to Josiah; *Because thine heart was tender and thou didst humble thyself before me, I have heard thee also, saith the Lord.*

Blessed Jesus! let it please thee to make continued manifestations of thyself to all thy people. Visit our souls in thy word, in thine ordinances, in all thy means of grace, by providences, in blessings, in mercies, in all thy sovereign appointments. And as thou hast given us to see thy beauty, thy loveliness, thy grace, thy suitableness and all-sufficiency; and won our affections to thy love in the moment of conversion; so, Lord Jesus, let us day by day have renewed discoveries of thy love, until at length, after the various manifestations and the sweet visits which thou makest us, we are growing up into an increasing knowledge of

thee, an increasing desire *after* thee, an increasing confidence *in* thee, and an increasing longing *for* thee and thy glory, thou wilt take us home to thyself to behold thy fair beauties, and to dwell with thee for ever. Amen.

CHAP. XXXV.

CONTENTS.

This chapter concludes the history of Josiah. He keeps a solemn passover. He goes to battle at Megiddo, and is slain. Is deeply lamented at his funeral by his people.

MOREOVER Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day* of the first month.

The passover which Josiah observed is mentioned in the parallel history, 2 Kings xxiii; but not so particularly recorded in all the circumstances of it. As this solemn service is by the Holy Ghost himself, through the apostle Paul's ministry, explained to have been typical of Jesus, perhaps it would not be unprofitable if we were to mark some of the more prominent features with which that service was observed in the Jewish church in those days of Josiah, by which we shall learn how highly the Lord prized it as an institution to lead the soul in type and shadow to the contemplation, by faith, of him who was the substance of the whole, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD,

3 And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; *it shall not be* a burden upon *your* shoulders: serve now the LORD your God, and his people Israel,

4 And prepare *yourselves* by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son.

5 And stand in the holy *place* according to the divisions of the families of the fathers of your brethren the people, and *after* the division of the families of the Levites.

6 So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that *they* may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

First; the ministry of the priests and Levites being arranged, we find the placing the ark, taking up the most important concern, as preparatory to the service. Jesus must be first beheld in the believer's view, as the grand object of all,—the altar, the sacrifice, and the priests; for it is by virtue of him, and his all-atoning offering, we draw nigh to God.

7 And Josiah gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all for the passover offerings, for all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks: these *were* of the king's substance.

8 And his princes gave willingly unto the people, to the priests, and to the Levites: Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave unto the priests for the passover offerings two thousand and six hundred *small cattle*, and three hundred oxen.

9 Conaniah also, and Shemaiah and Nethaneel, his brethren, and Hashabiah and Jehiel and Josabad, chief of the Levites, gave unto the Levites for passover offerings, five thousand *small cattle*, and five hundred oxen.

10 So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their courses, according to the king's commandment.

The offerings of the people very properly came *next* in order, preparatory to the service. *The Lord will be sanctified in all that draw nigh unto him.* Levit. x. 3.

11 And they killed the passover, and the priests sprinkled *the blood* from their hands, and the Levites slayed *them*.

12 And they removed the burnt offerings, that they might give according to the divisions of the families of the people, to offer unto the LORD, as *it is written* in the book of Moses. And so *did they* with the oxen.

13 And they roasted the passover with fire according to the ordinance: but the *other* holy *offerings* sod they in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and divided *them* speedily among all the people.

14 And afterward they made ready for themselves, and for the priests: because the priests the sons of Aaron *were busied* in offering of burnt offerings and the fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared for themselves, and for the priests the sons of Aaron.

15 And the singers the sons of Asaph *were* in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer; and the porters *waited* at every gate; they might not depart from their service; for their brethren the Levites prepared for them.

16 So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt offerings upon the altar of the LORD, according to the commandment of king Josiah.

17 And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days.

Matters being thus prepared, the service began. And let not the Reader overlook the employment of the priests, who it is said were busied in offering burnt-offerings and the fat until night. The sufferings of Jesus opened at the evening if we take in the garden scene, which as it formed so interesting a part undoubtedly we must. And the priests were alone engaged in this service preparatory to the great day. The sprinkling of the blood after killing the lamb, were certainly striking circumstances appointed by the Holy Ghost to lead by faith to the Saviour. Indeed every thing in it was typical of the Lord Jesus. A lamb of the first year, without blemish and without spot; the setting it apart four days before; the slaying it and roasting it whole; and not a bone of it to be broken; all these were very highly significant of Jesus. And as the paschal lamb was to be eaten, and wholly eaten, nothing of it being to be left, what could more decidedly speak in reference to Jesus, who as Christ our passover is not to be looked upon only, but by faith fed upon, and lived upon, and wholly so; *all* Christ, and all *in* Christ, to form a complete Saviour: surely such views held forth to the church, both at the original institution of it after coming out of Egypt, and now again in the days of Josiah so fully revived, at a period distant from the deliverance out of Egypt of at least 850 years; nothing can

more fully display the vast importance of the thing itself, and of the sense in which the Holy Ghost was pleased the church should consider it with reference to the body of Jesus Christ in his offering upon the cross for human sin once for all.

18 And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

19 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.

What an high encomium is this in the character of Josiah! and what a proof of the faith of Josiah's mind which he had with an eye to Christ.

20 ¶ After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him.

21 But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? *I come* not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from *meddling* with God, who *is* with me, that he destroy thee not.

22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.

23 And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded.

24 His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in *one of* the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.

We have here, as in all men, a shade to the character of Josiah. The sequel in Josiah's death proves that what Necho, king of Egypt, told Josiah, was well founded. Such a message therefore he ought to have regarded. But Josiah is in this instance a renewed evidence of the universal corruption of human nature. Where, blessed Jesus, shall we look but to thee for perfection?

25 ¶ And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they *are* written in the lamentations.

26 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his goodness, according to *that which was* written in the law of the Lord,

27 And his deeds, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

We have here introduced to us Jeremiah, whose prophetical writings make so important a part in the sacred canon of scripture. This prophet began his ministry in the 13th year of Josiah, and continued it until the carrying away of the people into Babylon. The character of Josiah cannot be better ascertained than by this lamentation of Judah. For though the times were so degenerate, yet Josiah was dear to them.

But no doubt the gracious souls lamented his death, in that they considered it as a certain presage that ruin was at hand. *The righteous is taken away* (saith the prophet) *from the evil to come.* Isaiah lvii. 1.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! in the view of this passover, and the religious observance of it by the whole kingdom of Judah, let you and I learn to prize our gospel privileges. They had the shadow, we have the substance. They looked to good things to come; we celebrate mercies fulfilled. They looked through the passover to redemption by Jesus's blood; we commemorate in the Holy Supper that redemption compleated, and have our feast upon the sacrifice. Blessed Jesus! thou art the passover, the sacrifice, the altar, the ark, the whole of all the types under the law. For all pointed to thee, and in thee had their completion. Offered up upon the altar for our sins a sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God our Father, thou wert roasted in the flames of his just indignation against our sins; and thy person becomes the everlasting nourishment, the wholesome, saving, healthful food of our souls, the bread of God for poor sinners, on which they may feed, and feast, and live for ever. Bread of God, I would call thee, that camest down from heaven, be thou my portion now, and to all eternity. On thee would I feed: to thee would I come, and make thee my passover, not only to preserve me from the destroying angel, and from the wrath to come, but to be my

glorious entrance, and my everlasting security, joy, and happiness in the presence of God for evermore.

CHAP. XXXVI.

CONTENTS.

This chapter brings us to the conclusion of the Chronicles. Here is contained the history of Jehoahaz, and his being deposed by Pharaoh. Jerusalem taken. Jehoiachin made king. Zedekiah's short reign. The proclamation by Cyrus.

THEN the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem.

2 Jehoahaz *was* twenty and three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem.

3 And the king of Egypt put him down at Jerusalem, and condemned the land in an hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

4 And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt.

The very short reign of Jehoahaz furnisheth but little subject of observation. The time was now hastening when Judah, like Israel, should cease to be a kingdom. Here is the Egyptian king triumphing over Judah, putting down one king and setting up another, and changing his name at his pleasure. Is this God's Judah? alas! what hath sin wrought! Here Jeremiah's account appears to have been marked with truth when he said, *The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron.* Jer. xvii. 1.

5 ¶ Jehoiakim *was* twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD his God.

6 Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon.

7 Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.

8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his

abominations which he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

Though this king reigned longer than his brother, even to *eleven* years, yet it should seem it was more at the pleasure of the king of Babylon than from any real power or authority he himself possessed. His taking him away to Babylon is a proof of it. Poor Judah, to what a miserable state art thou now reduced!

9 ¶ Jehoiachin *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD.

10 And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem.

Here is a three month's reign, like his uncle; but a period of evil it should seem also. Misery and trouble had no effect upon his mind. And indeed, awful as it is to think, yet the fact is undeniable; if affliction be not sanctified to soften the heart, it will be sure to harden it. Those vessels which Nebuchadnezzar dared to carry away out of the temple of the Lord, became a dreadful scourge in after times to Belshazzar his son. See Daniel chapter v.

11 ¶ Zedekiah *was* one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.

12 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD his God, *and* humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet *speaking* from the mouth of the LORD.

13 And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel.

14 Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the

house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.

15 And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place:

16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till *there was* no remedy.

17 Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave *them* all into his hand.

18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all *these* he brought to Babylon.

19 And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.

20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:

21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbath: *for* as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

Here we arrive to the sad page of Judah's history. To enter into a full detail of this history of the church we must connect with it the writings of the prophet Jeremiah. The character of Zedekiah, and his court, and servants, is there more fully exhibited in the preaching of the mournful prophet, and the sad treatment he met with from all parties. To this therefore I refer. And it will be highly profitable for the Reader, in order to have a clear apprehension of the ministry of the several pro-

phets, to remember, according to the prefaces of their writings, with which, for the most part, they open their commission, at what period of the several kings they ministered. But as I have already marked this in a distinct page in the very commencement of this Commentary, where the names of all the books of the Old Testament are set down according to the order in which they are supposed to have been written, I think it unnecessary to make any further observations upon them in this place. The history of Judah as a kingdom is now closed, and the Babylonish captivity begins.

22 ¶ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD *spoken* by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying,

23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. Who *is there* among you of all his people? The LORD his God *be* with him, and let him go up.

We have made a long stride in history from the close of the last verse to the beginning of this: no less than 70 years are at once leaped over. To fill up this chasm the Reader must look into the writings of Ezekiel and Daniel. Those men were carried away captives at the general captivity and taken to Babylon. And the Lord commissioned those servants of his to carry on the history as far as the spirit of prophecy, wherewith their writings abound, would permit, or in fact was necessary. From this proclamation *Ezra* begins in the book that bears his name the history of the church after the return of the people from Babylon. Sweet it is to see, and highly consolatory and refreshing, that amidst all the desolations of Jerusalem and the bondage of his people, the Lord had his eye upon them for good. Though they were cast down, yet not totally cast off. Jacob shall still again revive, and Israel be remembered. They are still beloved for Jesus' sake, how unworthy soever in themselves. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Jerem. xxix. 11. And Reader! what a wonder-working God is Israel's God! Abraham, the father of the faithful, is called from Ur of the Chaldees, made a great nation, and brought into Canaan. And now again his seed are carried back again into Chaldea for their faithlessness and unbelieving. *Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.* Romans xi. 33.

REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, Reader! and before you close the book of the Chronicles, which contains a faithful register of events both of men and things, think what desolation sin hath introduced into the circumstances of mankind; nay, even into the church of God! Who but must tremble in the relation of what is here recorded! and though here and there, in the character of some few gracious souls, we discover that the Lord hath not left himself without witness, which act as the salt of the earth to preserve the whole from universal putrefaction; yet *how* (as the prophet speaks) *is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed!*

And Reader! when you have duly contemplated this faithful portrait of man by nature, turn your eyes and behold what that same nature is when recovered by almighty grace in the person, purchase, blood-cleansing, soul-justifying, and soul-adorning righteousness of God our Saviour. Yes, blessed Jesus! I would behold thy church, not as it is in itself, but as it is united to thee, and made all glorious within; and also comely without, from *thy comeliness which thou hast put upon it*. Didst thou not at infinite expence, from infinite love, and by infinite power, purchase her to thyself? And dost thou not now watch her, water her every moment, and keep her night and day, lest any hurt her. Hast thou not for her unfaithfulness and departures from thee suffered, in different ages, *the wild boar out of the wood to root her up?* But in the midst of all thou hast brought her again in, and planted her in thine holy mountain. There may be, and there will be, the desolations of threescore years and ten; shaking dispensations, trying afflictions, and much tribulation; but though thou wilt *sift thine Israel as corn is sifted, yet* (thou hast said,) *a grain shall not fall to the ground*. Oh! thou the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof! be thou the Refuge of all thy people in the day of their adversity. And when the wealthiest empires of the earth have had their day, which thou hast appointed; when thy church scattered as it now is, amidst the various monarchies of the world shall be gathered together, and the time of her dispersion is over: Then oh! blessed, mighty, glorious Lord Jesus, then let that auspicious promise be fulfilled and realized over the wide universe of God, in which it is said *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever*. The peaceable kingdom of righteousness in Jesus, shall extend over all the habitable earth, and *all flesh shall see the salvation of God*. Amen.