

thine eyes regard, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. *The glorious Lord therefore will be unto his people at all times a place of broad rivers, and streams wherein shall go no galley with oars; neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge! the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king; he will save us!*

Hail! then, thou blessed Lord God, ЖЕHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! the gracious almighty covenanters in redemption. All scripture joins issue in this, and all the faithful rest secured in the mercy, that the Lord is bringing home his church through the wilderness of this world to glory; and whether evil men, or devils, rise up in confederacy against it, or whether by terrible things in righteousness the LORD is pleased to work, that period is ripening, and will unfold its blessed fruit in the very moment already appointed; *The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.—Amen.*

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THE  
SECOND BOOK OF THE KINGS,  
COMMONLY CALLED  
THE FOURTH BOOK OF THE KINGS.

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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

AS this *Second Book* of the Kings is but a continuation of the same subject as the *First*; it may not be amiss to remark, that the same general observations, which were proposed to the Reader's consideration in the opening of the *former*, will be proper to be kept in remembrance at the entrance on *this*. The Reader of discernment, whose mind is under divine teaching, will discover in this, as in the preceding book of the Kings, many precious things contained in it, beside the history itself: which, to an awakened, and enlightened understanding, will abundantly tend to satisfy him, both of its divine authority, and of the gracious design of the Holy Ghost, in causing it to be written, for the comfort and edification of the church in all ages.

Indeed there is one circumstance, and that of great note, to be attended to, in the perusal of the *second* book of the Kings, with which the *first* hath not such immediate connection: namely, that the greater part of the prophets, whose writings are placed at the end of the Bible, ministered to the church in their respective ages, during the period which this second book of the Kings records;

that is from the days of *Uzziah* to the time of the Babylonish captivity. All from *Isaiah* to *Zephaniah* (*Ezekiel* and *Daniel* excepted) exercised their ministry during the years this second book of the *Kings* compriseth. It will be a point of no small importance, to the help of the pious Reader to keep this in his recollection, while going over this book of God.

In regard to the period of history contained in the second book of the *Kings*, it includes somewhat about 340 years; carrying on the history of the church, from the death of *Ahab*, to the death of *Jehoiachim* which brings down the age of the world to between five and six hundred years before the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. And as, by so much the nearer the circumstances of mankind are seen to approach to that one glorious æra, which alone gives importance to the history of man; every thing in reference to it, must be found to rise in importance also. I would therefore beg the Reader to have his attention the more awakened as he prosecutes the history, that he may catch here and there, if possible, some precious glimpses of Jesus. For if, from the earliest dawn of revelation, in the days of the patriarchs, the great Covenant Head of his church never left himself without witness, but frequently (as if to manifest how much he longed for the period of his becoming man for the redemption of his people) he shewed himself to the faithful; surely, as that period drew nearer, it might be reasonably supposed, that he would now and then give a glance of his lovely Person, or (as the church beautifully expresses it) *from behind the wall of our nature look forth at the windows, and shew himself through the lattice.* In this book, if I mistake not, several instances of the kind occur. Happy will it be, both for Writer and Reader, if their discoveries correspond!

I only, upon the present occasion, as in the former, desire to send forth my poor labours, accompanied with the humblest prayers to him, whose blessing can alone make them profitable, that both to him that writes and him that reads, this sacred book may be blessed. Vouchsafe, gracious God! to instruct both by it, in that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, through the faith which is in CHRIST JESUS. Amen.

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## CHAP. I.

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*This Chapter opens with relating a circumstance of sin in the conduct of Ahaziah. Elijah is commissioned to send an awful message to him. The king, in consequence, commands the prophet to appear before him. His messengers are destroyed. Ahaziah dieth, and Jehoram succeeds him in the kingdom.*

**T**HEN Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.

The rebellion of Moab is a rod in God's hand to correct his people. Blessed are those corrections which lead our souls *to bear the rod and who hath appointed it.* Micah vi. 9.

2 ¶ And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that *was* in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease.

3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, *Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?*

4 Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed.

Reader! to what a wretched state was Israel reduced, in consequence of their idolatry! It is almost incredible to conceive how the mind of any man could ever be so degenerate as to fancy a dumb idol could speak. The name of this dunghill god is remarkable. The devil himself is called Beel-zebub. And this god of Ekron is Baal-zebub. *Baal* is the well known name of lord: and *Zebub* signifies a fly. But wherefore Ekron's image was so named, it is difficult to form an opinion. Are not the doctrines of charms, and omens, and what is called fortune-telling, and the like superstitions, similar to the consulting this dunghill idol? I wish many who call themselves Christians, would learn the wickedness, as well as folly of such conduct. How lovely the prophet Elijah appears in his open reproof. Oh! for faithfulness in all the servants of Jesus!

5 ¶ And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back?

6 And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, *It is not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?* therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

7 And he said unto them, What manner of man *was he* which came up to meet you, and told you these words?

8 And they answered him, *He was* an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, *It is* Elijah the Tishbite.

It is somewhat remarkable that the prophet Elijah, and John the Baptist, should have been as much alike in dress as they were in their commission. Our dear Lord pointed to John as the Elias of the gospel. *If ye will receive it*, (said Christ) *this is Elias which was for to come.* Matt. xi. 14. Observe the alarms of a guilty conscience in the case of Ahaziah. His own fears interpreted to him that this must be the servant of the Lord, whose religion he had despised. Like his father, he knew that no prophet of the Lord could prophecy good concerning him, but evil. See 1 Kings xxii. 8.

9 Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him, and behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down.

10 And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I *be* a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

This is a most interesting passage. Observe the rage and folly of the king, in sending to seize upon the prophet. Did he hope to alter the sentence by destroying the prophet? Could he indeed conceive so desperate a thing, as to think that the Lord's servants would be unprotected in the Lord's cause? But if the king was a wicked fool, how much greater this captain of his, with his fifty men! It is plain, he either did not believe him to be a man of God, or if he did, that he treated both him and his God with equal contempt. But what are we to think of Elijah? The apostle tells us that *he was a man of like passions with ourselves*: James v. 17. Reader! mark in the circumstances of God's best servants, how much all men need grace to subdue their angry passions. In making this observation, however, let it be remembered, that it is not made with a view to condemn the prophet, in the destruction of the captain with his fifty. Perhaps the awful example here made by their death was needful. And indeed, in the Lord's answering by fire and consuming them, it is plain that it was so. Elijah, therefore, did not exercise this authority given him, for himself or his own safety, but for the glory of the Lord. But what I particularly wish the Reader to observe with me in this history is, how different the servant is from the Lord. When the disciples of Jesus desired permission to do as Elias had

done, to a village of the Samaritans, how sweetly did our Lord rebuke them: *Ye know not* (said Christ) *what manner of spirit ye are of.* Luke ix. 53—56. Oh! thou dearest Jesus! how lovely dost thou appear? And how precious is it, to see thee in thy gracious features of character, in that thou wert truly *holy, harmless, undefiled, and sepearate from sinners.* Heb. vii. 26. Reader! behold in the awful death of this captain and his fifty, how jealous the Lord is of his honour! See also, what interest the Lord's servants have in the court of heaven? And observe, moreover, how careful the Lord is of his people. *Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones.* Matt. xviii. 6, 10.

11 Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly.

12 And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

Had not this wretched captain with his fifty, heard what had taken place? If the king was hardened and bound with the blindness of iniquity! was it needful that he should follow him to his ruin? This man exceeded in presumption, if possible, the former. For he had not only the awful example of his ruin before his face, but his demand on Elijah is more impious. He not only demanded him to come down, but to come down quickly.

13 And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight.

14 Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight.

How lovely doth this third captain appear, in thus intreating for mercy! He comes to Elijah because it was the king's command! But he comes to sue for favour. Reader! when the sinner, humbled under a sense of sin, and conscious of his undeservings, comes to the Lord God of the prophet's son, Elijah's Master; and throws himself upon the free bounty and sovereign grace of Jesus; oh! how we feel interested in his cause! He must succeed! Jesus waits to be gracious. He will save; that is,

he will be Jesus. How beautifully the prophet describes this: Zephaniah iii. 17.

15 And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king.

We are not told who this angel was. But may we not conjecture? When we recollect how much our Almighty Jesus, who is expressly called *the angel of the covenant*, delighted to manifest himself, in those early ages of his church, as if thereby, he meant to teach the faithful, that he longed for the fulness of time to come, when he would openly tabernacle among them; and when we consider, that this Angel of Jehovah's presence *saved them, and in his love, and in his pity he redeemed them, and bare them, and carried them all the days of old*: I confess I am inclined to imagine that I see Jesus, in all such sweet moments of communion with his servants. Isaiah lxiii. 9.

16 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baal-zebub the God of Ekron, *is it not* because *there is* no God in Israel to enquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

17 ¶ So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram reigned in his stead in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son.

18 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

Oh! how faithful is the prophet, when the Lord God of the prophets strengthens him! And, oh! how timid is the sinner, when the hand of God is upon him! Behold, Reader! the sure end of the ungodly: he shall not, he cannot stand in the judgment; nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. *The way of the ungodly shall perish.* Psm. i. 5, 6.

#### REFLECTIONS.

BEHOLD, my soul, awfully behold, in the sad example of Ahaziah and his captains of fifty, with their fifties, how sin hardens the heart, and renders men ripe for punishment! See in them thine own picture by nature; and, but for grace, how justly the features would be marked still. To

what a desperate length should I have run, had not the mercy of my God interposed, and stopped me in my daring career! Enlisted under the banner of sin and Satan; wearing his livery, and equipped with his armour, how readily in those days of unregeneracy, should I have contended with his faithful servants, and from ignorance, malice, and deceitful lusts, have dared to oppose all that was gracious. Blessed Jesus! at what expence of love, of grace, of mercy, and of blood, hast thou redeemed me, and made the deadly weapons of opposition fall from my hands.

To whom but thee, thou Holy One of Israel, who hast made our peace in the blood, of thy cross, shall I ascribe this great salvation? Yes! blessed Jesus! thou, and thou alone, as thy Father's precious gift to poor sinners, art the sole deliverer of the captive; for thou hast indeed taken away the captives from the mighty, and the prey of the terrible thou hast delivered. And now, Lord! what is the language of my heart, but like the poor submissive suppliant at the foot of Elijah, I would say to thee, as he did to the prophet; *let my life, I beseech thee, be precious in thy sight.* Oh! Jesus! thou Man of God, thou Man at God's right-hand, who art fellow to the Lord of Hosts; again I say, as he did, let my life be precious in thy sight! Haste then, come down quickly, O Lord, and let my soul live before thee. So shall I live to thy glory while here below, and to thy redeeming praise when thou shalt take me to thyself above.

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## CHAP. II.

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*This is an interesting Chapter, in that it contains the history of the removal of Elijah to heaven, and of establishing Elisha as his successor in the prophetic office upon earth: the dividing of Jordan; healing the waters: the children mocking Elisha, torn and destroyed.*

**A**ND it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

The ascension of Elijah to heaven, without passing through the intermediate passage of death, is striking and singular; never such an event happening before, except in the case of Enoch; (see Gen. v. 24, compared with Heb. xi. 5) it merits the more particular attention. Some have thought that the honour conferred upon this man, was on account of his great piety. And others have conjectured that it was to rouse the attention of the Lord's people, Israel, to the consideration of another state, which, from their long degeneracy into idolatry, was almost effaced from their dark and earthly minds. But though this latter motive might, in a secondary point of view, be in the design; yet I cannot be brought to think that Elijah's singular piety and faithfulness, great as both these qualities, (through grace) were in the prophet's life, were the cause. I rather think that both in the patriarchal age, in the instance of Enoch, and now, while the church was in Canaan, in the instance of Elijah, these things were wholly intended to signify that glorious event

hereafter to take place in the church of God, in the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Did not God our Father by such remarkable circumstances, mean to give the old church lively tokens of the triumph of our Jesus: who, in this return to heaven, entered as the glorious forerunner of his people, and took possession of the kingdom in their name? Seen in this point of view, oh! how inconceivably sweet and precious is this account of Elijah, dearest Lord Jesus, if by thy blessed Spirit our views of this subject are directed to the right apprehension of it! Oh! do thou open our hearts more and more to the discovery of the many precious things as they concern thee, which are contained in it, that while we read this chapter *our meditation of thee may be sweet.*

2 And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said *unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* So they went down to Beth-el.

3 And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace.

4 And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, *As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* So they came to Jericho.

5 And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace.

6 And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, *As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* And they two went on.

It should seem that Elisha, as well as Elijah, had the knowledge of the great event about to be wrought. And indeed it was generally known among the sons of the prophets. By what means the revelation was made is not said. But of what were the feelings of the school of the prophets, and of Elisha, on this departure of Elijah, we can only form conjectures. No doubt Elijah filled every hour, as the time drew on, in giv-

ing suitable instruction and consolation to those around him. There seems to have been a desire in the hoary prophet to have privacy, in that he so often requested Elisha to tarry behind him. Here, Reader! we may learn a lesson; how suited it is to dying men, and especially dying believers, to be free from much interruption. It is true, indeed, it becomes a most important office of the dying believer to leave a rich testimony behind him whose he is, and of his sure expectation of dying in the Lord. But this being done, the true believer in Jesus hath too much to say to Jesus himself to suffer interruption from the world, or the people of it. But here, dearest Lord Jesus, shall I not leave Elijah and his successor going from Gilgal to Bethel, and from Bethel to Jericho and Jordan, to contemplate thee in the garden of Gethsemane, and at the farewell supper? Oh! how sweet that discourse followed up and closed with prayer, in which thou didst commit thy people to thy Father before the awful night, when cold as it was, so as to compel the servants of the High Priests to make a fire to warm themselves, thy sweat and agony was so great as to induce great drops of blood falling to the ground from thy sacred body! Here, dearest Jesus! here is a subject enough to call up animation in the most lifeless heart. See Luke xxii. 39—44.

7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

Who that beholds those fifty sons of the prophets looking at Elijah's departure can help connecting with it the account of the angels who graced our Lord's triumphal return to heaven? Acts i. 9—11.

8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

That sacred river Jordan, what miracles have been wrought upon it! Here it was that Joshua, as a type of the Lord Jesus, made so illustrious an appearance. See Joshua chap. 3. Reader! as the ark which was always considered a lively type and symbol of God's presence, made to Joshua a dry and safe passage over Jordan; so to Elijah. Jordan itself is like the river of death. Jesus hath opened a safe and easy passage through it to all his followers. Here, according to the highly finished representation of the prophet, the ransomed of the Lord shall pass over. Jesus himself is the way; and by his finished redemption work he hath divided the waters hither and thither; so that the faithful will pass over as on dry ground. Isaiah xxxv. 9, 10.

9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing:

*nevertheless*, if thou see me *when I am* taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be *so*.

Elijah's question differs from Elisha's answer. What shall *I* do for thee? Whereas what Elisha desired, was not what Elijah *could* do. He had not the gifts of the spirit at his disposal. The departing prophet therefore seems to have referred it to the Lord, and to leave the decision of it in its being known by a sign. The greatest beauty in this passage, as it strikes me is, to notice wherein the servant Elijah differs from his master Jesus. The prophet Elijah desires to know what he should do for Elisha *before* he left him, conscious that he could do nothing for him *after*. But our Jesus, as if to teach his people that his departure was that he might enter more especially upon his glorious office of intercessor, bade them ask whatsoever they needed in his name, and promised it should be done for them. Reader! mark this in the memorandums of your heart, for it is a precious view of the Lord Jesus. John xv. 16.

11 And it came pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Instead of unprofitable and improper enquiries concerning this event, I would rather refer the Reader to the consideration, how lively a type the prophet was, in this instance, of his divine master. And is it not probable (for I beg it may be understood that I do not presume to say as much) that from this view of the prophet, in his translation, like Enoch, to glory, the minds of the faithful in the church through all the intermediate ages from Elijah to Christ, were strengthened in their faith of the coming Saviour; the outlines of whose redemption-work they were brought savingly acquainted with? Heb. xi. 5.

12 ¶ And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

Hereby Elisha gave proof that the petition he had asked was granted. The renting of his garment perhaps had a greater signification than the mere expression of grief.

13 He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan;

14 And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where *is* the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had

smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither : and Elisha went over.

15 And when the sons of the prophets which *were* to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

Hereby the Lord gave a decisive testimony that Elisha was by him appointed the successor of his servant Elijah. Oh ! that all who minister in holy things were careful to be convinced, that they carried with them their credentials.

16 And they said unto him, Behold now there be with thy servants fifty strong men ; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master : lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.

17 And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men ; and they sought three days, but they found him not.

18 And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not ?

There is somewhat mysterious in those verses. That the sons of the prophets should be so destitute of faith, and Elisha suffer himself to be led away to the permission of what is here said, appears so truly unaccountable, that I confess I know not in what sense to consider the passage. If the whole arose from the slenderness of their faith, it only serves to afford a renewed instance of human infirmity. Might not the prophet do in this instance as in after ages, John the Baptist did concerning the enquiries of his disciples about Christ, send them for their own conviction unto Jesus? Matt. ii. 2—6. Oh ! blessed Jesus ! how precious at every review is thy finished work !

19 ¶ And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city *is* pleasant, as my lord seeth : but the water *is* nought, and the ground barren.

20 And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought *it* to him.

21 And he went forth unto the spring of the

waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.

22 So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

Here Elisha enters upon his ministry. And a lovely service it was to heal the barren and corrupt waters of Jericho. Like the waters of Marah the appointed remedy cast in by the Lord's command became efficacious to both. Reader! remark with me, that this remedy in both cases was of the Lord; and the remedy itself also typical of Christ. Is not Jesus the healer of all our Marahs, and all our barrenness? And is not Jesus all this as the Christ of God; the Sent, the Sealed of the Father! John vi. 27.

23 ¶ And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up thou bald head.

24 And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

25 And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

In this destruction of the wicked children there is more evidently implied than is here related. If we look into the book of the Chronicles, and compare what is there said with what, from this book of the Kings, we learn of the present despised and low estate of the church, we shall discover that to such a degree of contempt was the Lord's cause now held by Israel, that the scoffing at God's servants was in common practice. Here the Lord was pleased to shew his abhorrence by this awful judgment on the children. It is not said that they were killed, but torn. Perhaps, however, in many instances, if not in all, death might follow. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

#### REFLECTIONS.

I PASS over all lesser considerations in the perusal of this chapter, to behold with all suitable thankfulness to the Lord, as the gracious author of the mercy, thy happy privilege Elijah, whom thy God was pleased to take to himself in glory, without passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death. Thou wert indeed an highly favoured servant of our Lord! no doubt as Enoch, so Elijah, found the translation by faith. For nothing but God's covenant love and grace in

Christ Jesus, could either have first procured heaven, or have opened a way of translation thither. In this believing view of Jesus, and by faith in his blood and righteousness, all the faithful have lived, and died as they lived, in the exercise of it. In this most dear and holy name I would hail thee, thou prophet of my God and Saviour on this happy departure of thine. And though now so many ages have run out since, yet in the faith of him who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, I would bless the Lord Jesus in the recollection of his grace and goodness toward thee. At the same time praising his most holy name for all his departed servants, who while passing through the grave to their home in glory, were not less beloved, neither less happy, but found in the same compleat and finished salvation; the same entrance being abundantly administered unto them, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But let not my meditations end here. Do I not behold in the servant some of the faint outlines of the master? Shall I see the prophet Elijah going up by a whirlwind into heaven, and shall I not recollect that the Lord God of the prophets ascended visibly into heaven in the presence of his apostles, attended with angels to grace his triumph? Yes! precious Lord! thou risen, ascended, and exalted Redeemer, my soul would take her flight on the wing of faith to the mount of Bethany, and gaze on thy blessed person, until that I followed thee to the right hand of power, and beheld all things put under thy feet! And surely the distinguished mercy manifested to the prophet Elijah in this instance, was principally with a view to shew to thy church under the Old Testament dispensation, that such would be thy glorious triumphs when thou hadst conquered sin, death, hell, and the grave; and hereby opened thy kingdom to all believers.

And was not this Elijah a type in many other similar situations wherein a servant might be supposed to mark out the features of his Lord. Was the prophet poor, and was our Jesus rich? Did he go in the strength of the Lord's sustenance forty days and nights to mount Horeb? And was not Jesus led up of the Spirit forty days into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil? Did the widow's cruse multiply under Elijah's ministry by the word of Jehovah? And shall I not call to mind, blessed Jesus, how the loaves and the fishes multiplied under thine own Almighty hand, to give bread to the people in the wilderness? Did the Lord so far honour his servant as to raise the widow of Zarephath's son; and shall I overlook him who by his own power called from death the widow of Nain's son; and as a confirmation that he was God, brought up Lazarus from the grave, and will at the last day raise the bodies of all his saints, because he is the resurrection and the life? Oh! precious Lord of all thy people, I would bless thy holy name in all I read of thy ministering servants, of grace and mercy manifested to them. And in all I behold of miracles wrought by their instrumentality, I would ever be looking unto thee as the cause. Thou art the author and the finisher. By thee kings reign, and princes decree justice. Patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the faithful in all ages, have acted under thy commission, and in thy name. To thee they bend the knee, and now the whole army of them, both in heaven and earth, joyfully confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

## CHAP. III.

## CONTENTS.

*We are here presented with some account of the reign of Jehoram. In an enquiry concerning a quarrel between Israel and Moab, Elisha is commissioned with a gracious message from the Lord to Israel. The Moabites are conquered.*

**N**OW Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.

2 And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD ; but not like his father, and like his mother : for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made.

3 Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin ; he departed not therefrom,

The account of Jehoram is somewhat more favourable than that of his father. He put away the image of Baal, it should seem, from his own house and family, but not out of Israel. What a strange thing this is ? If he was convinced of the sin and folly in his own house : surely it must have been equally so in Israel. And we find that Jehu, as related in the after part of this history, found the kingdom overrun with this idol. See Chap. x. 19. Moreover, it should seem that those sins which he followed of Jeroboam's were particularly the worship of the calves in Bethel. 1 Kings xii. 28.

4 ¶ And Mesha king of Moab was a sheep-master, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool.

5 But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

The rebellion of Moab became the cause of the renewal of the war. The Reader may perhaps not immediately be able to reconcile the idea of a king connected with that of a sheep-master in the same person. It would be so indeed in the present day. But he must be told that the revenues of princes in those ages of the world consisted more in the riches of agriculture and vineyards than either in extensive territories, or in gold and silver.

6 And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel.

7 And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I *am* as thou *art*, my people as thy people, *and* my horses as thy horses.

It is somewhat strange to find Jehoshaphat in league again after his former escape with Israel.—1 Kings xxii. 4 and 32. But Reader! how often is it the case in a spiritual sense. Alas! though we never go among mere carnal men without being wounded by their company, yet we are too often found with them again. Well might the apostle say, *Come out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing.* 2 Cor. vi. 17.

8 And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom.

9 So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them.

This was the very wilderness in which Israel more than 500 years before had wanted water; and where the Lord had miraculously provided them with water. 'See Numb. xx. 1—11.

10 And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!

Observe the daring impiety of the king of Israel, in charging this plan of his own upon the Lord. Oh! how disposed the mind of man is to evil.

11 But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here *is* Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

12 And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

15 And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

14 And Elisha said, As the LORD of host liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

15 But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

16 ¶ And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.

17 For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye and your cattle, and your beasts.

18 And this is *but* a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

19 And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

20 And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, their came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

I pray the Reader to mark with me the astonishing goodness of the Lord. Surely here, in an eminent degree, that scripture was fulfilled, *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* Rom. v. 20. Is it not somewhat strange that the prophet Elisha should be upon this occasion with the army? It would be so, had not the Lord been about to bestow a signal mercy upon his people, in the midst of all their undeservings. Reader! doth not God cause his holy word, as here he caused his servant the prophet, to be always near at hand for the consultation of his people. And Reader! do not fail to remark that though none of

the kings knew Elisha was near them; yet a poor, despised, and overlooked servant did. So is it not unfrequently now. While Jesus and his precious gospel are hid from the wise and prudent, how often are they revealed to babes. It should seem from the answer of the prophet that it was for the salvation of Jehoshaphat, and the faithful followers of the Lord, which were in the army, that Elisha had it in commission to attend the camp. How sweet the thought! It is on account of Jesus's Church the world is upheld. Believers in Christ are the salt of the earth, which preserves it from universal putrefaction. There is somewhat very striking in the prophet's waiting for the Lord's presence, and in the mean season composing his mind with melody. Observe the Lord's mercies. Israel shall have abundant supply, and to shew the Lord's hand in this supply, it shall be without the ordinary means. Moreover; Israel shall have a compleat victory over her enemies; and this victory shall be of the Lord. But what I most particularly would beg the Reader not to overlook in those mercies is what is said as to the time in which the beginning of them was shewn; namely, that it was *in the morning when the meat-offering was offered*; thereby evidently alluding to the season of sacrifice. If the Reader will consult the law of Moses on this grand subject, he will find that in the daily offering of the two lambs, one in the morning, and the other in the evening, this meat-offering with both formed a part in the solemn service. And as the Lord declared it to be a *continual* offering, in his sight of a *sweet savor*; and which was expressly commanded to be observed throughout their generations; and that there the Lord would *meet them*; would *dwell among them*; would be *their God*; and they should *know him*: I hope the Reader is led by the Holy Ghost, the great author of this appointment, to see so much of Jesus and his precious sacrifice, which he offered to God for a sweet smelling savour in all this, that he cannot need any observation from me for the pointing it out. What was the morning and evening lamb offered daily for, but to keep up a perpetual type of the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world? And what did the continual presentation of this sacrifice set forth, but that the efficacy of Christ's blood should be of perpetual duration, and his priesthood an increasing ministry? And wherefore was the promise of Jehovah to meet his people upon these occasions so solemnly assured, but to teach the church that the meeting place of Jehovah with his people is in Christ Jesus, and no where else? Reader! let me beg of you to turn to the several scriptures I shall here mark at the close of these observations. And oh! that the Lord may make them most blessed to your meditations! Exod. xxix. 38—46. Dan. ix. 21. Ephes. v. 2.

21 ¶ And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border.

22 And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side *as red as blood*.

23 And they said, This *is* blood : the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another : now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.

24 And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them : but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in *their* country.

25 And they beat down their cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it ; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees : only in Kir-haraseth left they the stones thereof ; howbeit the slingers went about *it*, and smote it.

No doubt the Lord overruled the minds of the Moabites to this delusion, in supposing what they beheld of the water to be blood. And indeed as they knew no rain had fallen, such an idea was not altogether improbable. The victory of Israel, which Elisha had promised in the Lord's name, certainly was well followed up. It is remarkable upon this occasion, that the Israelites were permitted to act different from a known law ! Deut. xx. 19.

26 And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through *even* unto the king of Edom : but they could not.

27 Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him *for* a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel : and they departed from him, and returned to *their own land*.

Observe the sad state of an idolatrous mind. Human sacrifices to devils are among the abominations. Thus the great enemy of souls to confound, as he thought, the divine institution of sacrifices in his church, which were all directed with an eye to Christ, tempted to this imitation among his vassals by such dreadful inventions. See an awful device of Satan to corrupt Israel : Numb. xxy. 2, 3.

### REFLECTIONS.

I STAY not to remark all the interesting things which this chapter contains ; otherwise I might charge it upon my soul to admire and adore, what I have read of grace and mercy transcending iniquity and

undeservings. But I pass over, for the present, the consideration of all these, important as they are in themselves, to contemplate Jesus most beautifully shadowed forth in the prophet's prayer, being answered in the time of the morning sacrifice. How sweetly was the prophet's mind prepared for the expectation of this mercy when the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to glorify Jesus, poured out of his blessed influences through the medium of this minstrel. But how glorious an object is it thus to behold in ages so remote from the hour of the Redeemer's sacrifice, its blessed efficacy in bringing down all needed blessings.

Pause, my soul, I charge thee pause, and say what upon earth can impress thy mind more in token of the infinite importance of the redemption by Jesus's sacrifice, than that Jehovah, in so many instances, made even the hour when in after ages that sacrifice was to be offered memorable, in the pouring out of his mercies. Did the Lord God appoint the morning lamb, and the evening lamb, a standing daily memorial of his lamb slain; and did all his faithful servants eye Jesus in their morning and evening oblation? And wilt not thou, my soul, now thy Jesus, thy God and Saviour, hath by that *one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified*; wilt thou not eye him in all thy poor presentations of the sacrifice of prayer and praise. Precious Jesus! grant me to look on thee continually. Thou art the only sacrifice for sin. Thou art the only lamb of God for a burnt-offering. The golden altar of thy divine nature, on which the sacrifice can alone be offered; and the everlasting High Priest by whom all can be presented. Thou, thou art the sum and substance of all. Oh! Holy Father! having boldness to enter into the holiest by his blood; behold I come in his name, making mention of his righteousness, even his righteousness only. Covered under his compleat, all-justifying robe, and washed from all impurities in his blood: let me enter into the sacred retirings of the Lord God. Yes! most gracious, indulgent Father! the remedy is of thy own providing; it is thou, blessed be thy glorious name, thou who hast *reconciled all things to thyself by Jesus Christ*. Look, holy Father, upon the face of thine anointed! and say, Canst thou deny me any mercy while I ask it in thy dear Son's name? And blessed, for ever blessed, be God the Holy Ghost, for having left upon record that sweet scripture to confirm those well grounded assurances in Jesus's name and work; *He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him freely give us all things?*

## CHAP. IV.

### CONTENTS.

*In this chapter the prophet Elisha is again introduced. He multiplieth the widow's oil. A son is given her. The child dieth. Elisha raiseth the child again. At Gilgal he healeth the poison in the pot. He feedeth an hundred men with twenty loaves of barley and eurs of corn. These are among the contents.*

NOW there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

The conduct of this widow may serve to teach us where we are to apply in our insolvency and distresses, even to the Lord God of the prophets. You and I, Reader, may truly say to Jesus, thou knowest, Lord, we are insolvent, and the creditor is come to take us into bondage. But thou knowest also, that thy fear is in us, and that we are thy servants. That is, if indeed Jesus hath called us by his grace. The conduct of this poor woman may serve also, in a yet more peculiar manner, to teach where the widows of God's servants, and especially his prophets, I mean his poor ministers, are to apply, when from the narrowness of their income they are left by their husbands insolvent and in poverty. What a blessed and gracious direction to this effect is that sweet precept and promise, Jerem. xlix. 11!

2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee; tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.

So may all the faithful servants of the Lord say, by way of leading the minds of the needy to Jesus;—What shall I do for thee? But Jesus can do all.

3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, *even* empty vessels; borrow not a few.

4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.

5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought *the vessels* to her; and she poured out.

6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, *There is not a vessel more.* And the oil stayed.

Do I not see in this representation how all the vessels of our poor na-

ture may be unceasingly filled from the inexhaustible fullness of Jesus, *the fullness of him that filleth all in all*. Borrow as we may of our neighbours, the largest vessels for containing his gifts and graces; the oil of gladness and of mercy, will infinitely overrun them all. I mean whatever views we derive from the instruction of others concerning the Lord Jesus, all vessels fail before his infinite fulness fails. Nay, Jesus takes occasion from our very wants to make vacancies for the pouring out of his fulness. I cannot but hope that the Reader will learn from hence that in all barrenness, leanness, and the like, the cause is in ourselves. It is unbelief which raiseth up a cloud of difficulties, as if the infinite fulness of Jesus was not enough to answer the wants of his people.

7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

See what a blessed issue to the poor widow's poverty. There was enough not only to pay the creditor, but to live both herself and household on what remained. And Reader! Is there not enough in Jesus and his precious salvation, to answer all the demands of that law, the breaches of which hath made you and me insolvent, and also to justify our souls before God?

8 ¶ And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where *was* a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, *that* as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

It appears from Elisha's history that he frequently travelled from mount Carmel to Samaria, and therefore was necessarily obliged to pass through *Shunem*, which was a small city belonging to the tribe of Issachar. See Chap. ii. 25. But (as the after events in this woman's life make it appear) the Lord was overruling the prophet's path in this instance to a work of mercy. The Reader will not fail, I hope, to have his mind directed to the steps of Jesus, concerning whom the Evangelist expressly tells us that *he must needs go* through Samaria; that is, I apprehend, Jesus was constrained in his coming into this world to seek and save that which was lost, to visit Samaria, because he knew that there was a woman among the number which his Father had given him for redemption, who was then living in a state of unawakened sin and unregeneracy. Oh! precious Jesus! And is there not an holy constraint, even now, in thine hallowed bosom, that in thy gathering all thy people unto thee, thou shouldest send thy blessed Spirit to awaken sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to God?

9 And she said unto her husband, Behold, now I perceive that this *is* an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.

10 Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and

a table, and a stool, and a candlestick : and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

There is a vast deal of generosity in this woman's mind : and yet nothing costly. How often, when entertaining strangers, have men found that they have been entertaining angels, or messengers of God, unawares. Yes ! Jesus was a stranger when he came into this world ; and had not where to lay his head. And oh, Reader ! how little did you and I know of him when he turned in and invited himself to our house, and to our heart ? for if he had not, we never should have invited him. Heb. xiii. 1. Matt. xxv. 35.

11 And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.

12 And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him.

13 And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care ; what *is* to be done for thee ? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host ? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

There is a nobleness of soul in the woman, in thus declining court favour. The prophet's interest was more with God than with the king. It is as if she had said, Speak for me not to man, but to God. Reader ! would you be spoken for ? Yes ! to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords ! to the captain indeed of the Lord's host ; even Jesus, the God of our salvation !

14 And she said, What then *is* to be done for her ? and Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

15 And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

16 And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, *thou* man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

17 And the woman conceived and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

In order to have a clear conception of the great earnestness manifested

among all the Israelites for children, it should be remembered that this was with an eye to the coming Messiah. That promised seed every Israelite was extremely anxious should spring from his family. Hence Gehazi concluded that a son would be so highly esteemed a blessing. And hence the Shunammite's expressions of joy were so lively.

18 ¶ And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

19 And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

20 And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and *then* died.

21 And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* upon him, and went out.

What an unexpected event was this? Who would have thought that a child unasked, and given at the instance of the prophet's prayer, should be thus soon recalled. Reader! do not fail to gather from it in the first opening of the subject, that the Lord exerciseth the graces of his people. They must be tried; they must be afflicted; on purpose that they may be led to trust on the Lord. Zeph. iii. 12.

22 And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

23 And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? *it is* neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, *It shall be well.*

24 Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive and go forward; slack not *thy* riding for me, except I bid thee.

What can be the object of this Shunammite in this journey? Are not all her hopes now gone? The child is dead. Had he still life in him there might be hopes. But now he is dead; wherefore go to the prophet? Doth she really believe that the prophet can raise him from the dead? Yes, Reader; depend upon it she thought so. I do not, for myself, hesitate to conclude that she really did believe that Elisha would give her son to her again. For observe, she said to her husband as she went: *It shall be well.* And I confess that I am the more inclined to this conclusion, because the apostle Paul, under the Holy Ghost, tells us in his

animated account of those illustrious heroes of faith in the Old Testament scripture, that the faith of the woman was such as to receive their dead raised to life again. See Heb xi. 35. Hence therefore this woman, with a faith in God's covenant-love and mercy, and which is equal to almost any thing we meet with in scripture, was so firmly persuaded that the gracious God who gave this child to her, on her part unasked, could as easily restore him to her again, that she hastens to the prophet to seek an interest in his prayers for the accomplishment of it. So that she leaves her dead child to fly to the living God. She makes no preparation for his burial; as if confident he should not be buried; but tells her husband all shall be well; and like a true descendant and daughter of the patriarch, goes in faith and confidence to God, accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead. Heb. xi. 19. Stop, Reader, I pray you, before you go further in the relation of this wonderful history, and ask your own heart whether, amidst the lesser trials for the exercise of *your* faith, you can imitate such an illustrious example! have not you the same gracious covenant God to fly to as she had? Hath the Lord any time raised your expectations in his pardoning love and mercy; and hath any thwarting providences afterwards intervened so as to cloud your hopes; how do you feel upon those occasions? It is true you have not the prophet Elisha to intercede for you. But I hope you do not overlook and forget that you have one infinitely higher, even the Lord God of all prophets, Jesus, Jehovah's High Priest forever, an everlasting advocate with the Father, and the propitiation of our sins. Oh! precious Jesus! how faded appear the most splendid actions of all thy ministering servants, when thy glory is beheld in view.

25 So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, *yonder is that Shunammite*:

26 Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, *Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?* and she answered, *It is well.*

The relation of this scriptural story, in the mere letter of the subject, is uncommonly interesting. The prophet's salutation and enquiry of her welfare, and that of her family, and her short but expressive answer, are very striking. It behoves the ministers of God both in spiritual and temporal mercies, to take part in the concerns of their people. And observe the pious frame of mind in the woman. Though her soul within her was convulsed with sorrow, as afterwards, when she came nearer Elisha, he saw her agony, for her very looks expressed it; yet such was her faith and patience, that she said, *All is well.* That is, all is well, because what hath taken place is from God's appointment. She hoped an happy issue both from what she knew God was *able* to do, and from what she hoped that God would do. Sweet and blessed frame of mind! And depend upon it, Reader, the same can our Lord Jesus Christ work by his

Holy Spirit in every heart of his people, when, as in the instance of this woman, he works a faith suited to every trying situation.

27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul *is* vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid *it* from me, and hath not told me.

28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, Do not deceive me.

This is a most interesting part of the narrative. It is here rising to a great degree of earnestness. Her whole soul was in action, and the body participated, as is evident in catching hold of the prophet. Not in anger, as Gehazi thought; but in love, as Elisha well interpreted by her looks. And her words vehemently spoke it in the most fervent pleading. What she said strongly expressed her faith that even now, unpromising as matters appeared, that gracious God who gave a son so contrary to all her expectations, could as easily give him to her again. Did I desire a son? Was this blessing first in *my* thoughts? Was it not in God's? And did God raise my expectations, and then so suddenly blast them? Surely this can never be in the plan of him *whose counsel shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure.* Isaiah xli. 18. Reader! oh that you and I had grace to exercise such lively faith in Jesus! May we not, with infinitely greater reason, as to the foundation of our faith, may we not say; Did we desire a Saviour? Did we first ask this unspeakable gift of our God? Did we even know that we needed a Saviour? Nay, did we not stand out long, very long, after the blessed, precious gift was given, against all his gracious calls; and in actions, if not in words, say, *We will not have this man to reign over us?* Now then, when he by his Holy Spirit hath conquered our stubborn nature, and made us willing in the day of his power; shall we fear or doubt his love? Did God our Father raise such glorious hopes of salvation; and will he now disappoint them? Oh! precious Jesus! I would gather a lesson from the Shunammite's faith; and as she caught thy servant the prophet by the feet, so Lord would I lay hold of thee while I lie at thy feet, and never, no never, let thee go until that thou bless me.

29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

30 And the mother of the child said, *As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* And he arose, and followed her.

It is gracious when Jesus sends his servants, the ministers of his gospel, to his people, and commissions them to good. But, oh! how infinitely surpassing the whole choir of angels in their ministering service, is the coming of Jesus himself. Yes! dearest Lord; like the Shunammite I would say, never shall my soul give over her importunity, till thou comest in thine own dear Person.

31 And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but *there was* neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

How important an instruction ministers of the gospel may gather from hence! Though they preach in their master's name, and act wholly by his authority; yet there will be no voice or cry for salvation in the sinner's soul; no, nor even the grace of spiritual apprehension in the most earnestly delivered truth, until the Holy Ghost speak *in* the word, and *by* the word, to the sinner's conscience. See 1 Cor. iii. 7. 1 Thess. i. 5.

32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, *and* laid upon his bed.

33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.

34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

While I desire the Reader to remark with me the graciousness of God, in thus teaching the early church by such miracles the blessed doctrines of the resurrection; and more particularly, as all of them referred to the Person of the Lord Jesus; I beg the Reader at the same time very particularly to keep in view the striking difference between the miracles of Jesus, and those of his servants, which acted in his name, and by his authority. Elisha prayed unto the Lord: Jesus commanded the dead to rise. The servant acted in the Lord's name: Jesus in his own. What prophet, what servant of Jehovah, ever said as Jesus did; *I am the resurrection and the life*. And who but God himself could, in confirmation of this blessed truth, have commanded the dead, like Lazarus, to have come forth? Oh! glorious Lord Jesus; John xi. 25. 43, 44.

36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

And will not the resurrection of the bodies of believers at the last day, be accomplished in a similar way? Shall not the soul take up the body? and then from being a glorified body, no longer partaking of its former corruptions, but which the grave, in its office of a destroyer, hath for ever done away, it will become the joyful, happy, holy partner with the soul in the union of both with Jesus, and altogether will partake in all the joys of salvation through an unceasing eternity. 1 Thess. iv. 13—18.

38 And Elisha came again to Gilgal: And *there was* a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets *were* sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.

This setting before the prophet, implies receiving instruction: probably expounding the scripture. Ezek. viii. 1.

39 And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred *them* into the pot of pottage: for they knew *them* not.

40 So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O *thou* man of God, *there is* death in the pot. And they could not eat *thereof*.

41 But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast *it* into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.

The poison in the food, spiritually explained, leads us to consider how cautious men should be, and especially the sons of the prophets, in consenting to any thing but what the apostle calls *wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*. The pure faith of the gospel is the food of our souls, and there is *death in the pot* indeed, when any thing be mixed with this, contrary to Jesus, as the sole cause of salvation. The wild gourds are like our wild works, all poisonous. But thou, O

man of God, flee these things, and let Jesus be the first and the last, and the all in all of redemption! 1 Tim. vi. 3. 11.

42 And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.

43 And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave *thereof*.

44 So he set *it* before them, and they did eat, and left *thereof*, according to the word of the LORD.

I cannot help remarking again, if peradventure I have mentioned it before, that among the precious things of the sacred scriptures of the Old Testament, those are not the least, which represent the Holy Ghost as shadowing forth, upon many occasions, the outlines of Jesus. When we see the prophets, and priests, and servants of the Lord sketching, in type and shadow, some of our Lord's characters, though it be ever so faintly; doth it not serve to teach you, Reader, (I bless the Lord it doth me) the graciousness of the Holy Ghost? Did not the blessed Spirit seem to intimate by this plan, that he always delighted to glorify the Lord Jesus: and as such, as if to keep up in the minds of his people, the coming of the Son of God, caused his servants to perform occasionally such acts of beneficence and mercy, as the Lord Jesus himself should hereafter more fully display, when the time came for his tabernacling among us? Hence feeding; with a few loaves, an hundred men, was a beautiful representation of him, who not only would cause the loaves and fishes to multiply under his Almighty hand, for the supply of the bodies of the hungry; but would himself be the everlasting sustenance of his people, as the living bread of their souls, for ever. Lord! I would say; *Ever more give us this bread!* John vi. 5—14, 32—58.

### REFLECTIONS.

How lovely is it to behold in this *great* woman of Shunem, (as she is called) the blessed fruits of real piety. Reader! if we love Jesus, we cannot but love his people. *This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.* She did not say to the prophet; *be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding the things are not given which are needful to the body.* But, like another *Lydia*, her language was; *If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.* And shall I not constrain thee, thou blessed Jesus, as oft as thou passeth by, to turn in unto me, that we may eat bread together? And be thou not as a way-faring man, that tarrieth but for a night; but

I would constrain thee to continue to the breaking of the day: and do thou, dearest, honored Lord, do thou make thyself known to me *in breaking of bread and of prayer*. And though I have nothing to provide thee; nothing, like this Shunammite, to give thee, (as the *bed*, and the *table*, and the *stool*, and the *candlestick*;) yet, when thou comest, thou wilt bring all things with thee; and thou thyself wilt be all things to me; light to my darkness, a rest for my wearied soul to repose upon, and *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that all my glorying may be in thee, O Lord!*

My soul! do thou learn from this great woman, *another* sweet lesson. While men of the world, *from* the world are seeking their portion, and would rejoice at the offer of being spoken of to the king of an earthly court; oh! for grace, like her, to see the happiness of dwelling among that people, whose distinguishing character it is, that *they shall dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations*. Yes! blessed Jesus! I would be spoken for to thee indeed, and count it my chief joy to be of thy people.

And lastly, before I take my leave of this precious chapter, let me look up to thee, thou blessed Author and Finisher of faith, that thou wouldest give me a portion of the same precious spirit, which this Shunammite possessed in so large a degree. Is it possible, dearest Jesus, that I can thus read of a woman, who lived in ages so remote from thy coming, acting faith upon covenant promises, to such an extent as really to receive her dead child, by virtue of it, raised to life again; and yet I, who live so many ages after thou hast wrought out and completed thy salvation, possessing all thine exceeding great and precious promises, doubt and fear, and too often call in question, the certainty of them? Oh! for grace to believe the record God the Father hath given of his dear Son. Lord! I would pray, above all things, give me faith, that I may be a patient follower of them *who now through faith and patience inherit the promises*. Lord! make me faithful unto death, that I may obtain *that crown of glory which fadeth not away*.

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## CHAP. V.

### CONTENTS.

*The interesting ministry of Elisha is continued throughout this chapter. The prophet healeth Naaman, the Syrian, of his leprosy. He refuseth the gifts and rewards of the Syrian. Gehazi, his servant, taking them, is in judgment smitten with the leprosy.*

**N**OW Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour; *but he was a leper*.

How beautiful is the account given by the sacred historian of this Naaman, by way of raising our notions of him. He was a great man, and an honourable man, and though an heathen, and an idolater, yet

the Lord had given him success in arms; but in the midst of all these things, the dreadful, loathsome disease of the leprosy, made him a matter of terror to every one that came near him, lest they should be infected by him. As a commentator once said, in reading this account of Naaman, "there was not a slave in Syria which would have exchanged his skin with him." Reader! such is sin! Wherever it is, and in whomsoever it reigns, it throws down all other endowments!

2 And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

Was there not an overruling providence in the captivity of this Israelitish damsel? Reader! look at the subject as it really is. The Lord had a mercy in store for Naaman. He causes, therefore, this daughter of his people to be taken into captivity. She tells of Israel's prophet, and the wonders he had wrought. And at length, for the better accomplishment of God's purpose, she is taken into Naaman's family. How often doth the Lord do this in spreading the savor of his grace, and making his salvation known. The early knowledge this little maid had of Elisha and his miracles, may serve to give parents a profitable lesson by the way, how very speedily they ought to bring them acquainted with Jesus and his great salvation. Parents know not how soon their children may be sent out into life, or they themselves taken from them. Oh! that fathers and mothers, whose bowels yearn over their little ones, would seriously lay this to heart, and very early bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord! Ephes. vi. 4.

3 And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord *were* with the prophet that *is* in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

4 And *one* went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that *is* of the land of Israel.

I cannot but request the Reader's attention with me, to the story of this case of Naaman altogether, because I conceive that it is intended, in a spiritual sense, to set forth both the grace, and the freeness of that grace, as a type of Jesus's cleansing poor leprous sinners. And I think it the more remarkable, because we only meet with the instance of this Gentile in the Old Testament to this point; and the instance of another Gentile in the New, the woman of Canaan; though her child's disease was not of the leprosy, yet Jesus can be alone the healer of both. Matt. xv. 22, &c.

5 And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand *pieces* of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have *therewith* sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

7 And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, *Am I God*, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

8 And it was *so*, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes, let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

Reader! observe the different conduct induced by nature and grace in the minds of men. When the king of Israel received this letter, nature, untaught of God, made an alarming interpretation. When Hezekiah received a letter from an idolatrous prince, grace prompted him to spread it before the Lord. Isaiah xxxvii. 14.

9 So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

Reader! do not fail to observe how Naaman came. His gifts were in his hand, and he himself, no doubt, gorgeously dressed, to cover his leprous body. And could he hope that an enemy to Israel, the God of Israel would regard him? Behold in this man, an emblem of the coming of every unawakened sinner! He comes to purchase his salvation. He comes in his best robes, his best chariot, his gifts to hide his sinful soul. Alas! all these must be put off, and the sinner come down from all high flights of fancied goodness, before a cure can be obtained for the leprosy of the soul.

10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

And says not the prophet, in this instance, like the gospel? *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*, is the sweet language it proclaims. Go, wash in the blood of the Lamb, not seven times indeed, for he that is once washed, needs no more sacrifice for sin.

Heb. x. 18. And, as Jesus himself graciously said, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit. John xiii. 10.

11 But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12 *Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?* So he turned and went away in a rage.

Reader! observe in the conduct of Naaman, what a deadly foe the pride of man is to the reception and enjoyment of our chiefest felicities. And observe further, though this Syrian had cause enough, in such a filthy, loathsome disease, to have made him meek of heart, yet it had not subdued his pride. Alas! how many are there under the most humbling situations, that are never truly humbled in soul. Is not the conduct of Naaman, in preferring the great rivers of Damascus to the sacred streams of Jordan, not dissimilar to those who are unconscious of the difference between the outward means of grace, and the inward power. And wherein doth Naaman differ from modern unbelievers, who, ignorant of God's righteousness, go about to establish their own righteousness, and take up with their own washings in the Abenas and Pharpars of unrenewed nature, rather than the precious blood of Jesus?

13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, *if* the prophet had bid thee *do some* great thing, wouldest thou not have done *it*? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Father has the same sense and meaning here, as master. Every master of a family may be said to be the father of it, in this point of view. But what I principally desire of the Reader in this verse is, to trace the hand of the Lord in the work. It was the Lord that caused this little maid of Israel to be carried captive into Syria: and perhaps among other causes, very principally with a view to lay a foundation for the cure of this leper. Our Lord himself expressly tells us, that while many lepers were in Israel at this very time when Naaman was healed, Elisha had commission to cleanse none but him. Luke iv. 27. It was therefore the Lord which caused this little maid to be taken captive. It was from the same

overruling providence of the Lord, that she was brought into Naaman's house. It was the Lord which brought to this young Israelite's mind, while in Damascus, the recollection of Elisha the prophet, in Israel. And it was the Lord which prompted her to recommend Israel's prophet to Naaman's wife. And was it not the same Almighty Lord which operated upon Naaman's other servants to cool down their master's rage, and induce him to listen to reason. And above all, who but the Lord of Hosts, *who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working*, could have influenced this haughty Syrian to go down into Jordan, after all the hatred and rage he had manifested against it. Pause, Reader! in the review of the many means adopted to the accomplishment of this one purpose, and learn with me to admire and adore the providences of God, thus wonderfully carrying on the sacred purposes of his will. And do not stop here. From the world of nature press on and contemplate the same Almighty hand unremittingly engaged in the world of grace. Who was it, my soul, that first gave me to see, amidst all my fancied greatness and importance, that I was but a poor leper! Who was it first told thee of Jesus Christ? Who inclined me to seek from this Almighty Prophet in Israel, the cure of my leprosy? And when, like another Naaman, I came to him in all my best things, hoping to purchase his favor by presenting him his own gifts; and the mortifying message from his holy word was sent me, to wash in his blood and be clean, my proud self-righteous heart was lifted up to reject, in rage, such a doctrine; who was it that rooted out that pride, that softened that rage, and made me willing to be saved in God's own way, and by the Lord's own power? Oh! precious, precious Jesus! never, never let me lose sight of thy Person, grace and mercy, but delight to give thee, what is so justly thy due, all the glory!

15 ¶ And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that *there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel*; now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.

16 But he said, *As the LORD liveth*, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.

17 And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.

18 In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, *that* when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon:

when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.

19 And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

Observe what a vast work the Lord had wrought upon the heart of this Syrian! The leprosy of his skin was not only washed away, but the leprosy and unbelief of his soul. He is at once convinced that the God of Israel must be the true God, and that there can be no other. Observe, moreover, how his heart was affected in wishing now for Elisha to take this blessing, as he called it, not any longer as the price of his cure, but as the token of his love. And observe how precious the very earth of Israel was to his view, who before this had despised her sacred river. Such, Reader! will ever be the blessed effects of a change of heart, and the real conversion of the soul to God. Poor man! he feared indeed, that he should be obliged to dissemble his religion when the king, his master, on his return to Syria, made him attend him to his idol worship. And here he strikingly represents the case of many a young convert in the first opening of his renewed life. Timid, and apprehensive lest carnal friends should mock or ill treat them, many there are, like this Syrian, or like Nicodemus, who in their first awakenings visit Jesus by night. John iii. 1, 2.

20 ¶ But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

21 So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well?

22 And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.

23 And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him.

24 And when he came to the tower, he took them

from their hand, and bestowed *them* in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed.

I cannot pass over the review of these verses, without desiring the Reader to stop and remark with me, one or two circumstances which deserve our observation. What an awful character was this Gehazi! Though he had been so long with his master, had seen his miracles, heard his discourses, and was fully convinced that Elisha's God could and would supply all their need; yet he covets the pitiful things of silver and gold Naaman had brought with him! And, Reader! do not fail to observe, for it is a point of the greatest importance; that being in the prophet's service, seeing his miracles, and hearing his sermons, conveyed no grace to the heart of Gehazi. Naaman's servants, though idolators, were faithful. Elisha's, though worshipping the true God, was base and unworthy. Oh! what lessons do such things teach us! And note, in this lying conduct of Gehazi, how daringly he called upon the Lord's name in the deed: *As the Lord liveth*, was his expression. If I mistake not, the Holy Ghost hath marked the self-existence, sovereignty, and supremacy of the Lord Jehovah, under this phrase in scripture, in many parts where we meet with it. But then it is always spoken either by the Lord himself, or in the most reverential manner by his servants, in reference to him. And it implies that, strictly and properly speaking, none but God himself can be said to live. All other existence is derived from him. If this be the real state of the case, I pray the Reader to remark with me, what an awful profanation that must be of this distinguishing perfection of Jehovah, when light minds, and which is very common in the world, in their trifling conversation, by way of confirming what they say, assume this language, and cry out; *as I live*; Isaiah xlix. 18. Jerem. xxii. 24. Ezek. xiv. 16. 1 Kings xviii. 15, &c.

25 But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence *comest thou*, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

26 And he said unto him, Went not mine heart *with thee*, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? *Is it* a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?

27 The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper *as white as snow*.

It should seem from what Elisha said to Gehazi, concerning *oliveyards, and vineyards*, and the like, that the prophet not only knew by divine teaching the *sin* of Gehazi, but the *design* he had in seeking Naaman's

wealth. He was probably planning a scheme to dispose of the money, in the purchase of those things for himself and family. Observe, if so, what an awful purchase he had made, instead of the one he intended. He and his seed shall be marked with a loathsome disease and with infamy for ever. Oh! ye unhappy, deluded, and wretchedly mistaken parents! do ye not, when determining to be rich, pierce yourselves through with many sorrows. Oh! Sirs! what of real happiness do you entail upon your offspring, though you entail upon them the largest estates! And if for the purchase of this world's treasure for your children, you sacrifice your own everlasting good; think in a dying hour, with what reflections in yourself, or what *real* thankfulness and affection from them, your mind will be comforted. Oh! for that solemn sentence of our adorable Lord, to be written on the walls of every worldly man's house, and sounded in his ears every day; *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Matt. xvi. 26.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! though I have already detained you, as we have passed through this chapter, with several suitable reflections, as they appeared to my view, and arose in my mind, yet I would call upon you before we close the book, to gather up a few more of a spiritual nature, which I pray the Lord to make profitable.

If we have been reading the history of Naaman's leprosy, as a matter remote from ourselves, and simply no other than a transaction which occurred in the annals of Israel, many years since; we have lost all the gracious designs which the Holy Ghost had in view, in causing such a memorable event to be recorded. Reader! you and I, and every child of Adam, bring with us into the world the leprosy of sin. *Behold!* (says David) *I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* Are you, Reader, sensible of this? Do you know it? Do you believe it? Oh! then, I say as the captive maid in Syria; Would to God you were with the Prophet that is in Samaria, even the Lord God of the prophets, the Lord Jesus Christ, for he would recover you of your leprosy!

And, Reader! do not come, as the Syrian did, with chariots and horses; do not seek with gifts and rewards to purchase redemption. Our Jesus is too rich to need our gold; too gracious to accept any thing from his creatures. He hath a fulness, a suitableness, an all-sufficiency in himself; and his precious blood cleanseth from all sins. Dearest Jesus! behold I come to thee. No Naaman, no leper at the foot of the mountain; no Æthiopian can need cleansing more than I: the cry of my soul is, *Lord! if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!* Oh! then put forth thy gracious hand; put forth thy sovereign grace in my soul, and pronounce the healing word, *I will; be thou clean;* and immediately my soul shall be healed. And healed by thee, like Naaman, my soul will be fully convinced that there is no God in all the earth, no other name under heaven given among men, whereby sinners may be saved! Oh! for grace to know with Paul, now that *we are washed, that we are sanctified, that we are justified in the name of the*

*Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. And shortly we shall then come to sing that song with all the congregation in heaven, who were once leprous as ourselves, but have been cleansed in the same laver of redemption; thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.*

## CHAP. VI.

### CONTENTS.

*The account of the ministry of Elisha is continued yet further through this chapter also, as in the former. He causeth iron to swim. He discloseth the king of Syria's counsel. He smiteth his army with blindness.*

**A**ND the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.

It is more than probable that the place spoken of here, was at Gilgal, for there we find Elisha presiding over the sons of the prophets some time before. See chap. iv. 38. But surely the Reader, (if he be acquainted with the Bible) cannot but be put in mind, from the straitening of the sons of the prophets, of that spiritual straitening, it was predicted the sons of the Prince of the prophets, even the Lord Jesus, in after ages should feel, when from flocking to Christ the multitudes should be so great, that there should not be room enough to receive them. Isaiah xlix. 20, 21. Mal. iii. 10. Luke v. 1. Mark iii. 20.

2 Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.

3 And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.

It will not be doing violence to this passage to look through the servant to his Lord in it. In all my goings forth shall I not say to thee, thou blessed Jesus, go I pray thee with thy servant? Yes! dearest Lord, like Moses would I always seek thy presence. For heaven itself would be darkness without the light of the Lamb. Rev. xxi. 23. Exod. xxxiii. 15.

4 So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

5 But as one was felling a beam, the ax head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.

6 And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast *it* in thither; and the iron did swim.

7 Therefore said he, Take *it* up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.

Observe how very poor the sons of the prophets were. In all ages it hath been so. Hence James calls upon the church to attend to this, as a mark of God's choice; *poor of this world, but rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.* James ii. 5. It is refreshing to behold the Lord's presence with his sent servants, in working miracles for the confirmation of their faith.

8 ¶ Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place *shall be* my camp.

9 And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.

10 And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

Reader! while you pay a just tribute of praise to the Lord of Elisha, for making him thus instrumental in the deliverance of Israel; shall not our minds be led to reflect how graciously our Jesus, by the sweet, but secret influences of his Spirit, saves us again and again from the stratagems of our great spiritual foe. Oh! who shall say how often, and to what extent this interposing grace and wisdom of our Jesus, is made the cause of numberless redemptions in times of danger, while we are unconscious of it! What a beautiful instance we have of this superintendence of the Lord, in the case of Hagar, Sarah's handmaid; and what a lovely evidence she gives of her faith in beholding it. She called the name of the Lord that spake unto her; *Thou God seest me.* Gen. xvi. 13. Reader! keep this in view. Never forget that Jesus is still the same; always looking on, always ready to deliver. What a thought is that to refresh my soul! Jesus, my God, seeth me: he is always with me. He knows the path I take. He seeth the approach of every foe. Oh! for strength in the Lord, and in the power of his might!

11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us *is* for the king of Israel?

12 And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that *is* in Israel,

telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber.

13 ¶ And he said, Go and spy where he *is*, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, *he is* in Dothan.

14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

The mad and childish attempt of the king of Syria to take the prophet, serves to set forth the bitterness of the carnal mind against God and his servants in all ages, for it is always the same, only manifesting itself under different forms and ways. If the king of Syria really believed that Elisha could divulge the thoughts of the king of Syria, so as to deliver Israel; surely he ought to have known that he must be equally competent to know, and to counteract his base design planned against himself.

15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them.

17 And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

• 18 And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

19 And Elisha said unto them, This *is* not the way, neither *is* this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.

20 And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the

eyes of these *men*, that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, *they were* in the midst of Samaria.

The dreadful alarm of Elisha's servant, and the perfect composure of Elisha himself, hold forth a precious lesson. In minds of little or no faith, the smallest events, which appears unpromising, excite fear. Alas! what shall we do? But firm, steady, fixed faith in Jesus, passes over all that *we* can do, to rest upon what the *Lord* can do. When we behold Jesus for us, and Jesus with us; he alone makes our mountain full of horses of fire, and chariots of fire, and we are enabled in his strength to bid defiance to every foe. Doth not this confirm that precious doctrine of the ministry of angels: Heb. i. 14. But oh! how much greater and sweeter the doctrine of the everlasting presence of Jesus. Matt. xxviii. 20. But, Reader! while attending to this very delightful instruction, arising out of this passage, do not neglect to attend to another. Observe, how at the instance of the prophet's prayer, the eyes of his servant were opened; and the eyes of the Syrians blinded. What is this but a confirmation of what every day, and in every faithful ministry of the word, occurs. *Some* have their eyes opened to see the wondrous things of God's law. *Others* remain in total blindness and ignorance, under the most powerful preaching. And is not this a solemn confirmation of the words of our Lord Jesus, when he said; *For judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.* John ix. 39.

21 And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite *them*? shall I smite *them*?

22 And he answered, Thou shalt not smite *them*: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.

23 And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

How sweet a gospel lesson is folded up under these verses! When Jesus brings his enemies under his power; and when their eyes are opened to see how the Lord hath surrounded them, their knees bow before him, and the weapons of sin fall out of their hands: oh! how graciously doth he feed them, and what great and gracious provisions doth he set before them. Yes! dearest Lord Jesus, I will bear testimony to thy clemency, for when thou hadst brought me home to thyself, and made me thy captive in the day of thy power; then it was, O Lord, that I dis-

covered the truth of that blessed scripture : *This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.* Luke xv. 2.

24 And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.

25 And there was a great famine in Samaria : and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore *pieces* of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five *pieces* of silver.

It should seem that this must have been a long time after what is related in the foregoing verse ; probably several years, because that a famine had taken place to lead to it, of which we have no immediate account. And to what an extent must have been this famine, when the head of an ass, which was among the unclean, was sold so high. Dove's dung, it should seem, was the name of some herb, or root, or pulse.

26 And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king.

27 And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee ? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress ?

28 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee ? and she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow.

29 So we boiled my son, and did eat him : and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him : and she hath hid her son.

30 And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes ; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, *he had* sackcloth within upon his flesh.

To what a dreadful state was Israel now reduced ; but yet not a word of reform. We do not hear of a single soul sending up a cry to heaven. Alas ! how sin hardens the mind ! And to what a dreadful degree is our nature fallen, when, passing by all natural feelings, such shocking deeds, as are here recorded concerning these women, take place !

31 Then he said, God do so and more also to

me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.

32 But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him; and *the king* sent a man from before him: but ere the messengers came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: *is* not the sound of his master's feet behind him?

33 And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil *is* of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?

Let the Reader mark the blessed properties of distinguishing grace. Oh! how hardened was the king of Israel's heart, to have so soon forgotten the ministry of Elisha, in bringing the Syrians by blindness into his power. And yet further: He confesses that he sees God's hand in it, and yet dares to rebel. Reader! pray do not overlook and forget, that by the fall all men are the same. If preventing, and restraining grace hath happily kept you from such presumptuous sins, learn to behold the cause, and give God the glory.

#### REFLECTIONS.

IN the perusal of this chapter, methinks I would behold the prophet Elisha with the greater attention in the several interesting services here recorded of him, by way of having my soul directed, with more awakened earnestness, to contemplate the grace of his heavenly Master. Surely it is refreshing and comfortable, and highly encouraging to the souls of the faithful, when we see the gracious condescension of the Lord in the employment of such men. What a series of servants the Lord hath called forth in his church! And to what a noble employment have they been called! And when we call to mind the cause of their ministry; and more especially their Employer; how is the mind overpowered in the contemplation of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge. He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

But is it possible, my soul, to look at these, even all of them, though of the highest order, and pause a moment in the review, without having all the finer affections exercised, and called forth in the contemplation of thee, thou blessed Jesus, thou Prince of prophets, thou Lord of all thy

faithful apostles, and of the innumerable host with which thou art encircled on mount Zion, where, as a Lamb that hath been slain, thou still appearest to manifest the everlasting nature of thy priesthood, and the eternal efficacy of thy redemption! Oh! precious Lord God! how do all prophets, priests, and kings sink to nothing before thee! Be thou my unceasing meditation! Teach me, Lord, to behold thee so as to have all my soul's affections drawn out after thee, and unto thee. Oh! for grace to behold the Lord always before me, and to set him on my right hand. May my eyes, by the lively exercise of faith, gaze upon him with unceasing, and increasing delight, until he shall come to take me home, to behold his glory in one full blaze of everlasting day; and never, never more shall I then take off my ravished eyes from beholding his beauty. *Make haste, my Beloved; and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*

## CHAP. VII.

### CONTENTS.

*The ministry of Elisha is continued through this chapter. The prophet, in the midst of dearth, foretelleth an immediate, and incredible plenty. An unbelieving lord treating the prophet's prediction with contempt, Elisha foretels his death, which accordingly takes place.*

**T**HEN Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time *shall* a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

I think it is more than propable, that as Elisha had been at prayer for this mercy, he now acted faith upon God's promise of kind answers to prayer, and in the strength of it thus predicted. But observe how he speaks of this great and unexpected mercy in the Lord's name. Reader! it is very precious when, from the lively actings of faith in God's promises in Christ, we can take confidence in a faithful covenant God during dark seasons. It was this that rendered the patriarch's faith so memorable. Rom. iv. 18—22.

2 Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned, answered the man of God, and said, Behold, *if* the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see *it* with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

What a solemn lesson is read to us in the short, but awful history of the unbelieving lord! Reader! depend upon it, that the grossest of all sins is this want of faith in God's Christ. And John tells us the reason of it; *he maketh God* (says the apostle) *a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* 1 John 5, 10, 11. And what an awful thought, that after such rich and astonishing mercy and grace, with which

the Lord Jehovah hath introduced his dear and only begotten Son, as the salvation of poor sinners, that any sinner should be so daringly wicked and ungrateful, as to disbelieve God, and slight his mercy. Think, Reader! and let the thought be rivetted on your whole soul; how impossible it will be to escape if you neglect so great salvation. Heb. ii. 3.

3 And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?

4 If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

Passing by the particulars of this event as an history, I pray the Reader to look beyond the mere letter of the subject, to discover the very sweet, spiritual instruction it contains. In this light perhaps, the Reader will perceive in these men, the state of poor leprous sinners strikingly pointed out. Sin, like the leprosy, shuts out the soul beyond the gate. Every way and all around, nothing in ourselves can bring help. Spiritual death by famine, or the sword, must terminate the sinner's course, if he sits down contented in that state. Whereas, if grace entering the heart prompt him to go to Jesus with even the slenderest degree of faith, saying like these men, If Jesus kills, I can but die; then the poor creature finds a graciousness in the Lord, not only infinitely surpassing all deserts, but all expectations. Dear Lord! who shall describe the extensiveness of thy grace in receiving poor sinners, and eating with them! Luke xv. 2.

5 And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, *there was* no man there.

6 For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, *even* the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.

7 Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, *even* the camp as it *was*, and fled for their life.

8 And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid *it*; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence *also*, and went and hid *it*.

How unexpected sometimes is the deliverance of the sinner! How surprized is the soul in the discovery of Jesus and his fulness! And do observe, Reader! how the Lord was pleased to act for the delivery of his people. What terrors and alarms did the Syrians feel, so as to be afraid where no fear was. The Lord had said that he would send the hornet among their enemies, and induce fear and alarm. And here we see it fulfilled. Deut. vii. 20.

9 Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

10 So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, *there was* no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they *were*.

11 And he called the porters; and they told *it* to the king's house within.

When the sinner is brought by the Holy Ghost, into the knowledge and enjoyment of the Lord Jesus, his mind is so engaged, that the treasures he finds he hides from all men's view. But when he calls to mind the perishing state of other sinners, he can no longer eat his morsel alone. His language is then altered, and he cries out under the influence of it; *Oh! come hither and hearken all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul.* Psm. lxi. 16.

12 And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.

Observe how closely allied to one another are guilt and unbelief.

The king of Israel knew how little he merited mercy from the Lord, and therefore he could not be led to hope, notwithstanding his servant the prophet had taught Israel to expect some great deliverance, that it would be bestowed. Reader! this is the case, more or less, with every sinner. Conscious that we merit not the Lord's favour, and measuring God's dealings by our own, we slight the declarations of his grace. Jesus sweetly, graciously, tenderly, tells us, that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. But alas! unbelief robs Jesus of his glory, and our souls of their happiness. And thus, like the poor king of Israel, to the very last we know not how to give the Lord the credit of his free grace and salvation!

13 And one of his servants answered and said, Let *some* take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain; which are left in the city, (behold, they *are* as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, *I say*, they *are* even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed :) and let us send and see.

14 They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see.

15 And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way *was* full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king.

16 And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour *was sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

With what caution and fear did the king of Israel and his poor besieged army proceed in this business! With what doubts and misgivings, do sinners, when first coming to the Lord Jesus, seek his face! Oh! for faith in full confidence, to come to the Lord Jesus, and cast the whole soul upon him! the sale of the flour and the barley corresponding to the prophet's prediction, shews how the mercy was from the Lord, and how plentiful a mercy it was. A measure of flour was somewhat more than a peck. And a shekel was not much more in value than about two shillings of our money. Here, indeed, the subject of plenty to the famished, as it relates to the body, falls far short of the gospel fullness to famishing souls; for the grace which is imparted according to the measure of the gift of grace, is *without money and without price*.

17 ¶ And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him.

18 And it came to pass as the man of God had, spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria.

19 And that lord answered the man of God and said, Now, behold, *if* the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

20 And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.

The sad event in the death of this unbelieving lord, is very particularly related by the sacred historian, to shew that no word of the Lord can fall to the ground. And it is a point of the most solemn consideration, that the very name Jehovah hath taken in the scriptures to shew, that he is God in a covenant way, carries with it the most decided assurance that the Lord must be as faithful to all the denunciations of his wrath, as to all the gracious promises of his love. Reader! do not overlook, or forget this! Read these solemn scriptures upon this point, and may the Lord suitably impress them upon our minds. Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 36.

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### REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us in the view of this siege of Samaria behold a lively emblem of the soul's distressed state by reason of sin. Alas! what a famine, not of bread and of water, but of all spiritual comfort, ease, or satisfaction. In the contemplation of the unexpected deliverance, is not Jesus and his great salvation beautifully represented! how graciously discovered! how unexpectedly found! the soul of the sinner, like the leprous man while going from one tent to another, in the discoveries of Jesus's love can hardly be brought to think it real. How is it, Lord! he continually cries out, as he enters into the enjoyments of salvation, how is it dearest Jesus, that thou hast manifested thyself unto me and not unto the world.

But oh! Reader, let us also learn from the awful history of the unbelieving lord, what everlasting dangers sinners are exposed to, and what everlasting horrors they must ultimately fall in; when neither the

gift of the Father in his dear Son, nor Jesus's love in the free-gift of himself, can work upon the hardened heart to believe unto salvation. What aggravated misery will that be to the unawakened, unregenerated heart, to have lived under the sound of the gospel, but never regarded its gracious calls! to have seen, like this unbelieving lord, the plenty and fulness of redemption, but never to have partaken of it. Oh! dearest, blessed, precious Jesus! add a blessing to all thy finished work, and give me not only to see and to hear with the outward means, but to taste and enjoy the blessed inward power of thy saving truth to the salvation of my soul!

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## CHAP. VIII.

### CONTENTS.

*The history of the Shunammite, which was in part given before, is prosecuted yet further in this chapter. Her land is restored to her. Here is also a short relation concerning Hazael, the Syrian. This chapter also contains an account of Jehoram's wicked reign, and of Ahaziah his successor in the kingdom.*

**T**HEN spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn, wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the LORD hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years.

2 And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years.

It should seem that this famine soon succeeded the siege of the enemy, which the foregoing chapter relates. *A fruitful land the Lord makes barren for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.* Psm. cvii. 34. That this famine was peculiar to Israel, seems evident from the prophet's commanding the Shunammite to seek for sustenance elsewhere. But Reader! how delightful is it to see the Lord providing for his secret ones when he brings his judgments upon others. Never doth the Lord more strikingly manifest himself than when he hides them.

3 And it came to pass at the seven years' end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines: and she went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land.

4 And the king talked with Gehazi the servant

of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done.

5 And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, *this is* the woman, and *this is* her son, whom Elisha restored to life.

6 And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that *was* her's, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now.

The history of this Shunammite, in having her land restored to her, is very interesting. But the spiritual improvement to be made of the passage is much more so. You and I, Reader, have left our settlement, lands, and property, for there is truly nothing valuable in the whole of them, when a leanness of soul is induced, and a famine of all spiritual blessings comes upon us by reason of the fall. But when Jesus our *Goel*, our kinsman-Redeemer, hath raised up the tabernacle of David which was fallen down, and made our dwelling place a *Bethlehem*, an house of bread for his people, then like this woman we may cry to our king for the restoration of our inheritance in and by Jesus. There is somewhat very striking in this passage respecting Gehazi, and his conference with the king at the moment the Shunammite came to claim her land. So, Reader, we may discover in numberless instances in common life, how the Lord, in his providence, overrules times and events to the promotion of his own glory and his people's comfort. But is there not another sweet thought arising from it also? Was the king of Israel so intent to listen to Gehazi's account of the deeds of Elisha; and shall we not be earnest to enquire after the wonders of Jesus?

7 ¶ And Elisha came to Damascus; and Benhadad the king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither.

8 And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and enquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

9 So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood

before him, and said, Thy son Ben-hadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

10 And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the LORD hath shewed me that he shall surely die.

It is not very easy to ascertain at what time it was that Elisha paid this visit to Damascus. The Lord had commanded Elijah about 21 years before this period: See 1 Kings xix. 15. (that is, supposing this visit of Elisha was as is here introduced, after the two years of famine before related) to go to the wilderness of Damascus, and anoint Hazael king of Syria; but when Elisha went to Damascus, or what the occasion of his visit there was for, is not easy to conjecture. But passing this by, there is one sweet spiritual improvement ariseth out of it, which is this. Even in those distant ages before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the visits of God's faithful servants to the Gentile and Heathen portended the full salvation being one day preached to them. And though our dear Lord told the poor woman of Canaan that he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet we find that he graciously included both Jew and Gentile in one fold, and told that very woman that such was her faith, that every thing should be as she herself desired. Matt. xv. 22—28. When we consider in what was related before (see chap. vi. 8—14.) how Benhadad intended to have seized the prophet, it is somewhat singular that Elisha should venture his person in Damascus. And it is no less strange that the mind of Benhadad should have been so changed from hatred to reverence. But these things are all plain to be understood, when we trace the hand of the Lord in it. God giveth his servants boldness like a lion, and the same God turneth the hearts of his children's enemies to be at peace with them, when such things answer the sovereign purposes of his holy will. The answer which Elisha made to Hazael's question, whether the king his master should recover, seems at first reading ambiguous. He said, thou mayest certainly recover; howbeit he shall surely die. But the sense seems to be very plainly this; the disorder under which thy master labours is not in itself mortal; of that disease he might certainly recover. But he shall surely die of a violent death. For thou wilt be his executioner. This the following verses prove.

11 And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept.

12 And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash

their children, and rip up their women with child.

13 And Hazael said, But what, *is* thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? and Elisha answered, The LORD hath shewed me that thou *shalt be* king over Syria.

14 So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? and he answered, He told me *that* thou shouldst surely recover.

15 And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped *it* in water, and spread *it* on his face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead.

I hardly know a passage in history, even if simply considered as an history, more strikingly interesting to the feelings than this interview, as here related between Hazael and the prophet. Figure to yourself the astonishment of the ambassador of Damascus when the man of God prophesied to him of his future greatness, and the bloody deeds of his life which would follow. Behold on the other hand the aged servant of the Lord looking so fixedly upon the countenance of Hazael, until the tears burst in a flood before him to give vent to his distress of soul. But while we meditate on the passage simply as an interesting history, let us look at it with more awakened earnestness, as a solemn record in the word of God, and then we shall discover if so be the Holy Ghost gives us a gracious apprehension of its important contents, that it opens to our view higher objects for instruction. Hazael is but the representative of human nature, universally speaking. All men like him may shudder at crimes in the cool hour of distance which in the after season of heated passion, and all things corresponding to accomplish, they may without remorse perform. Reader! do you know this? Do you believe it? Hath the Holy Ghost by his divine teachings led you on so far in the knowledge of yourself, as to be brought to this compleat conviction of sin? If you are, precious to your soul will be the knowledge of, and the rejoicing in, the Lord Jesus! but if not, depend upon it you possess but at the best a poor apprehension of your own dreadfully ruined and lost state; and of the vast and infinite value of that compleat deliverance from sin which is found only in the Lord Jesus. The cruelty of Hazael, seems to have commenced from the moment of this interview, as the devil entered into the heart of Judas from the time in which Jesus gave him the sop, as a token of his being the traitor. John xiii. 26, 27. His return to his master opened with a lie. His next step was to stifle him in his bed. And his bloody deeds to Israel, as Elisha had foretold, we are informed of in the after part of his history. See chap. xiii. 22. Reader! pause over such a character, if it be only to look up with reverence, and all the warmth of affection and thankfulness,

in the contemplation of the blessed effects of distinguishing grace: *Who hath made thee to differ from another?* Is an enquiry which every child of God should be unceasingly putting to his own soul. 1 Cor. iv. 7.

16 ¶ And in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat *being* then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign.

17 Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

18 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab: for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the LORD.

I would have the Reader remark with me on the character here given of pious Jehoshaphat's son, how dreadful it must have been to such a father to have so degenerate a son. Grace is not hereditary. Jehoshaphat could not give it to Joram. And it is to be feared, by what we read in the history, short as it is, that the good man did not take the likeliest means to obtain it. For he made, or suffered to be made, a dreadful alliance for him with Ahab's daughter. And add to this, he gave up the kingdom to him before his death, thereby feeding his pride and vanity. Reader! have you never remarked (I have) how frequently pious parents, from consulting natural feelings more than gracious ones, awfully indulge their children to their hurt, and thereby give displeasure to the Lord. What an awful reproof was that of God to Eli, 1 Sam. ii. 27, &c.

19 Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, *and* to his children.

I pray the Reader not hastily to pass over this sweet verse. Judah must not, cannot indeed, be destroyed for Jesus's sake. Our Lord sprang out of Judah. So that there is a blessing in it, and he that looketh on saith, *destroy it not*. Oh! precious, precious consideration! Isaiah lxxv. 8, 9.

20 In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves.

The revolt of Edom demands our particular notice, because it was a confirmation of the dying patriarch Isaac's prophecy to his son Esau, who was the origin of Edom. Isaac had told his favourite son Esau, that the time should come when he should break Jacob's yoke from off his neck. And here we see it fulfilled after a servitude of more than 150 years from the days of David. Gen. xxvii. 39, 40.

21 So Joram went over to Zair, and all the chariots with him: and he arose by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him about, and the captains of the chariots: and the people fled into their tents.

22 Yet Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time.

23 And the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

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

Nothing further remarkable appears in the lives of these impious men but that they lived, transgressed, and died. Indeed, in the parallel history in the book of the Chronicles, we are told that this monarch died not much unlike the traitor Judas, for his bowels gushed out. And as he had lived most probably without being beloved, so he died unlamented. 2 Chron. xxi. 18, 19.

25 In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign.

26 Two and twenty years old *was* Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel.

27 And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as *did* the house of Ahab: for he *was* the son in law of the house of Ahab.

28 And he went with Joram the son of Ahab to the war against Hazael king of Syria in Ramoth-gilead; and the Syrians wounded Joram.

29 And king Joram went back to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram

king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

I bring all these verses within one point of view, as they only relate to us the short, but wicked reign, of another of Judah's kings. And I only detain the Reader with a single observation upon this man's history, that it was in mercy not suffered to be lengthened out to any great period. It was but a year. And oh! the sad thought to sinners when the year of grace is over, and all the years of iniquity, be they ever so many, consumed; what a dreadful barter have they made, if, though gaining the whole world, they have lost their own soul!

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us pause over our review of this chapter, for many are the gospel instructions we may take home to our own hearts under the Holy Ghost's gracious teachings. In the restoration of the *Shunammite's* land, let us recollect with holy joy that our Jesus hath effectually secured our inheritance, notwithstanding there hath been for many a seven year a famine and poverty indeed in our souls. Jesus our king will restore the whole, and infinitely more than we lost, by the apostacy of our first Father. Yes! thou dearest Lord, thou hast accomplished the redemption of all our mortgaged possession, and it is thou which will finally put us into the enjoyment of them again; thou art indeed thyself our inheritance, our portion, our joy for ever.

In the account of Hazael, Reader, let us not overlook the general character of all men by the fall. That you and I perpetrate not such crimes, is not from any difference in nature, but wholly from the preventing and restraining grace of our God. Oh! blessed Jesus, teach me by such views how to appreciate thy great salvation more and more, and with the greatest thankfulness of soul, give thee all the glory, that I am kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. And Reader, let the view which the Holy Ghost hath here given us in the character of Hazael, when by a change from an humble station to the highest, the seeds of iniquity were thus ripened, and brought forward to the production of its deadly fruit. Oh! let it teach us how much wiser and more gracious the Lord is than we are ourselves, in choosing the lowest stations for his people, to keep them from evil. Yes! dearest Lord, I thank thee for the very place thy wisdom hath appointed me. I know it must be the best because thou hast ordained it. Thy love, as well as thy wisdom, was in it. Bring me therefore, Lord, according to thy promise, as a poor, blind, ignorant creature, in a way that I knew not; leave me not to my own understanding, but give me grace to be always committing my ways unto the Lord, and to acknowledge thine hand in all; for thou hast said thou wilt direct my paths.

One thought more, Reader, before we quit this chapter, in that precious account which is given us concerning Judah, that *the Lord would not destroy Judah for David's sake*. Oh! the blessed thought! oh! the soul-reviving consideration, amidst all the discouragements of sin, and the fears of unbelief! Judah's Lord still lives, still reigns, and the efficacy of his blood and righteousness is of everlasting duration. Learn, my soul, henceforth to live out of thyself upon this covenant God in

Christ. In him is all thy fullness and sufficiency. And in so improving and using Christ, according to God the Father's gift and design concerning him, all happiness and security must be found. In thy name, blessed Jesus, would I rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness may my soul be exalted.

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## CHAP. IX.

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter contains the anointing of Jehu: his slaughter of Joram: the death of Jezebel, and the relation of her being eaten by dogs.*

AND Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead:

2 And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber;

3 Then take the box of oil, and pour *it* on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not.

The only observation I would detain the Reader with on this passage, because it should seem to be of all others the most important, is the ceremony of anointing. When we behold how this service was uniformly appointed in the church from the beginning of its being formed in the wilderness, doth it not strike the Reader's mind that the Holy Ghost evidently intended by it a matter of vast signification. The Lord Jesus himself was anointed with the Holy Ghost; and all his people are said to have an unction from the Holy One. 1 John ii. 20. Oh! thou blessed Spirit! graciously condescend to anoint me with all thy precious influences in the knowledge and enjoyment of the Lord Jesus! Let the holy oil of thy grace soften all my heart, and make the savor of his dear name be as ointment poured forth!

4 So the young man, *even* the young man the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead.

5 And when he came, behold, the captains of the host *were* sitting; and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all us? And he said, To thee, O captain.

6 And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head; and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, *even over Israel.*

Is there not a sweet lesson veiled under this message and commission of the prophet? When the Lord sends his word to any individual, though he be in the midst of many, like Jehu among the captains, yet the call is personal, the grace is distinguishing, and the manifestation of it secret. The Lord spake a word, it is said, in Samuel's ear. 1 Sam. ix. 15. So here, the errand was to Jehu. Reader! be assured that it is a personal enjoyment of God's calls, and his word, which make them precious. *The master is come and calleth for thee.* John xi. 28.

7 And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel.

8 For the whole house of Ahab shall perish: and I will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel:

9 And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah:

10 And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and *there shall be none to bury her.* And he opened the door, and fled.

In the commission which Elisha had intrusted this servant among the prophets with, no doubt more was intimated to him than is related in the chapter, from the addition he made in this command, how Jehu should act in the destruction of the house of Ahab. Reader! remark in it, how sure God's judgments are. As an apostle hath said most assuredly will it be found, that the judgment of the unregenerate lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. 2 Pet. ii. 3.

11 ¶ Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord: and *one* said unto him, *Is all well?* wherefore came this mad *fellow* to thee? And he said unto them, Ye know the man and his communication.

12 And they said, *It is false;* tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake he to me, say-

ing, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel.

13 Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put *it* under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king.

It should seem from the manner in which the captains received Jehu on his return from the prophet, that they were not much disposed at first to treat the prophet, or his message, with respect. But probably from a divine power accompanying Jehu's account of his anointing him king, and seeing perhaps the traces of the holy oil upon his head, their hearts were wrought upon to co-operate with the Lord's appointment in establishing Jehu to be king.

14 So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. (Now Joram had kept Ramoth-gilead, he and all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria.

15 But king Joram was returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria.) And Jehu said, If it be your minds, *then* let none go forth *nor* escape out of the city to go to tell *it* in Jezreel.

16 So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel; for Joram lay there. And Abaziah king of Judah was come down to see Joram.

17 And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company. And Joram said, Take an horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, *Is it* peace?

18 So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, *Is it* peace? and Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. And the watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again.

19 Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, Thus saith the

king, *Is it peace?* And Jehu answered, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me.

20 And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again; and the driving *is* like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously.

The whole design of this being from the Lord, we have only to remark how the various circumstances all concurred to insure the ruin of Ahab's house. From Ramoth-Gilead to Jezreel was no small distance, yet to prevent tidings getting there before Jehu, he hastens on to surprise Joram. And on the other hand, the alarm of Joram in sending out, upon the smallest appearance, messengers to enquire into the cause, shews the guilt of his conscience. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked!* Isaiah xlviii. 12.

21 And Joram said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite.

22 And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, *Is it peace, Jehu?* And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts *are so many?*

23 And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, *There is treachery, O Ahaziah.*

24 And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.

25 Then said *Jehu* to Bidkar his captain, Take up, *and* cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him;

26 Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith

the LORD. Now therefore take *and* cast him into the plat *of* ground, according to the word of the LORD.

27 But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw *this*, he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot. *And they did so* at the going up to Gur, which *is* by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and died there.

28 And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his sepulchre with his fathers in the city of David.

29 And in the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab began Ahaziah to reign over Judah.

What a remarkable coincidence of circumstances must it have been to have brought those persons to the very spot of Naboth's vineyard! as if to remind Joram of the cause of his death, and his merited judgment. Reader! what greater testimony can a man require that the Lord's hand is in that visitation, when the punishment ariseth out of the very crime itself, in the consequences which follow.

30 ¶ And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard *of it*; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.

31 And as Jehu entered in at the gate she said, *Had* Zimri peace who slew his master?

32 And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who *is* on my side? who? And there looked out to him two *or* three eunuchs.

33 And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and *some* of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot.

34 And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed *woman*, and bury her: for she *is* a king's daughter.

35 And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the scull, and the feet, and the palms of *her* hands.

36 Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, *This is* the word of the LORD, which

he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel:

**37** And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, *This is Jezebel.*

The character of Jezebel is one of the most awful we meet with in history among women. So much so, that a false prophetess in the revelations, and probably by way of pointing out more emphatically her infamy, is called after her, Jezebel. And when, in the same book, the final destruction of idolators, under the type of the great whore of Babylon and the mother of harlots, is spoken of in allusion to the same horrible crimes as Jezebel excelled in, it may serve to teach in some measure how very awful in the sight of God such characters are. Rev. ii. 20. I only detain the Reader just to repeat how certain God's judgments are. Jezebel had long triumphed; but a day of reckoning did at length come. So must it be with all. Oh! for grace to keep in view the sure events awaiting. *Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him. Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him.* Isaiah iii. 10, 11.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! what an awful view doth this chapter afford of the miserable end of Ahab's race! and how is the mind struck in the contemplation, that a family such as his was in all its branches, should sell themselves to work evil with greediness. It is hardly possible to go through the review of what is related in these histories of Ahab and Jezebel, and their household, without being again and again prompted, as we prosecute the history, to exclaim from whence arose such determined resolute impiety!

But we read the history of Ahab to very little profit if it doth not serve to lead the mind further than to the history of a single person or family, and not to behold in it the outlines of wicked and ungodly men in all ages. In the dreadful opposition Ahab made to the God of Israel and his prophets, do we not behold the representation of all the Ahab's of every age, in their avowed hatred and opposition of the blessed gospel of the Lord Jesus? Do not some of this description of men seem as if every faculty was in league against the Lord Jesus? Their hearts boiling with implacable bitterness; their ears resolutely stopped to all the grace of the gospel; their voices uniformly raised against it. Despisers of divine things, haters of God and of his Christ! *Oh! my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly mine honor be not thou united.*

But, Reader! how sweet to the view is Jesus after looking at human nature, and human wickedness, in such awful characters! and farther, how increasingly so is the view of Jesus under these considerations, when we are enabled to trace our preservation and upholding from such awful examples on ourselves! Yes! dearest, almighty Jesus! it is to thy preventing and restraining grace we cheerfully ascribe all the praise and the glory. Truly must I say (and, Reader, do you not the same?)

by the grace of God I am what I am! that I have been, that I now am, and that I feel confidence for the future I shall be kept; on my bended knees, in transports of rejoicing, would I give the whole glory to the adorable Redeemer. It was Jesus who committed to his Father his church for this blessed purpose in the close of his ministry, and just before his death. And it is to this one source the preservation of his people must be everlastingly ascribed. *Keep* (said the gracious Redeemer as he placed his dearly purchased flock in the hands of the Lord) *keep, Holy Father, through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.* And hence under the unquestionable evidence of this great truth, would I cry out with the apostle, and say, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten to this lively hope all his people, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*

## CHAP. X.

### CONTENTS.

*In following up the commission Jehu had received from the Lord for the destruction of Ahab's house, we are told in this chapter how he caused 70 of his sons to be beheaded. He destroyeth the worshippers of Baal. But yet himself, the close of the chapter relates, departed not from the sins of Jeroboam.*

AND Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote letters, and sent to Samaria, unto the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to them that brought up Ahab's children, saying,

2 Now as soon as this letter cometh to you, seeing your master's sons *are* with you, and *there are* with you chariots and horses, a fenced city also, and armour:

3 Look even out the best and meetest of your master's sons, and set *him* on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house.

Reader! do not fail to connect with this view of the slaughter of Ahab's sons (or grandsons more likely) that solemn denunciation of God in the second commandment. Exod. xx. 5. And recollect also, that as sin is the sad inheritance entailed upon our whole nature from the first wretched transgressor; so punishment is also connected with it. Rom. v. 12. Oh! sweet is it to behold our inheritance in another Adam from the opposite holiness of his nature. Precious Jesus! how much more hath the grace of God, and the gift by grace which is by thee, abounded unto many. Rom. v. 15—17.

4 But they were exceedingly afraid, and said,

Behold, two kings stood not before him : how then shall we stand ?

5 And he that *was* over the house, and he that *was* over the city, the elders also, and the bringers up of the children, sent to Jehu, saying, We are thy servants, and will do all that thou shalt bid us ; we will not make any king : do thou *that which is* good in thine eyes.

We may learn wisdom from men of the world, for our Lord tells us, *that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.* Oh ! that we might learn from hence how vain and unprofitable all opposition to the Lord is, when neither the great, nor the mighty, among the kings of the earth can stand before him. See that striking Psalm 2d. Luke xvi. 8.

6 Then he wrote a letter the second time to them, saying, If ye *be* mine, and *if* ye will hearken unto my voice, take ye the heads of the men your master's sons, and come to me to Jezreel by to-morrow this time. Now the king's sons, *being* seventy persons, *were* with the great men of the city, which brought them up.

7 And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they took the kings sons, and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent him *them* to Jezreel.

It is well worthy the Reader's observation, that those very elders of Samaria had been the same time-serving creatures at the command of Jezebel respecting the murder of Naboth, when she sent letters in Ahab's name to procure Naboth's death. And as the punishment of the house of Ahab, the murder of Naboth is again and again mentioned as among the causes ; who but would wish to connect in the review of the whole the awful finger of God. See 1 Kings xxi. 1—15.

8 And there came a messenger, and told him, saying, They have brought the heads of the king's sons. And he said, Lay ye them in two heaps at the entering in of the gate until the morning.

9 And it came to pass in the morning, that he went out, and stood, and said to all the people, Ye *be* righteous : behold, I conspired against my master, and slew him : but who slew all these ?

10 Know now that there shall fall unto the earth

nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spake concerning the house of Ahab: for the LORD hath done *that* which he spake by his servant Elijah.

11 So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he left him none remaining.

While we read in this account how Jehu waded through blood, I pray the reader to keep in view that he acted as the instrument of the Lord. The commission was from heaven. And when we take into the account how Ahab by his idolatry had been ruining the souls as well as the bodies of Israel, surely such daring impiety called for more than ordinary vengeance!

12 And he arose and departed, and came to Samaria. *And as he was* at the shearing house in the way,

13 Jehu met with the brethren of Ahaziah king of Judah, and said, Who *are* ye? and they answered, We *are* the brethren of Ahaziah; and we go down to salute the children of the king and the children of the queen.

14 And he said, Take them alive. And they took them alive, and slew them at the pit of the shearing house, *even* two and forty men; neither left he any of them.

As these were of the family of Ahab, no doubt they were partakers of his idolatry, and justly therefore involved in the punishment.

15 And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab *coming* to meet him: and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart *is* with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give *me* thine hand. And he gave *him* his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot.

The honorable testimony the Holy Ghost hath given of this man in another part of sacred scripture, demands our attention. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of him in great commendation as the honored father of the house of the Rechabites at a period distant from this above 300 years. And when we behold him coming out of his retirement to thank Jehu for

his services to the Lord ; it may serve to teach us that in the worst of times the Lord hath a seed that serve him in the earth. See Jerem. xxxv. 19.

16 And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD. So they made him ride in his chariot.

Poor Jehu did not, it is plain, know the real motives of his heart when he said this; for the Holy Ghost tells us in the same chapter, verse 29, that Jehu himself was an idolator. Reader! oh! that the blessed Spirit may teach us the truth of that solemn scripture; that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*. Jerem. xvii. 9. Blessed Jesus! how very precious art thou to my soul in the view of this. Cleanse, Lord, the thoughts of my heart, and wash it in thy blood.

17 And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah.

18 ¶ And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; *but* Jehu shall serve him much.

19 Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice *to do* to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live. But Jehu did *it* in subtilty, to the intent that he might destroy the worshippers of Baal.

20 And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed *it*.

21 And Jehu sent through all Israel: and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that came not. And they came into the house of Baal: and the house of Baal was full from one end to another.

22 And he said unto him that *was* over the vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. And he brought them forth vestments.

23 And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there

be here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only.

24 And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, *If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him.*

25 And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, *and* slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast *them* out, and went to the city of the house Baal.

26 And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them.

27 And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught house unto this day.

28 Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.

Jehu, as the Lord's minister in the destruction of idols, is graciously upheld in this service. And, hence all the worshippers of Baal were blinded to their own destruction. But, Reader! do observe, for it is a sweet part of this history, how the Lord overruled this event for the preservation of his hidden ones. There were seven thousand of the seed of the faithful in Israel in Elijah's time, as the Lord told him, though he, poor man, thought himself the only one. And no doubt there were many at this time when Jehu accomplished the Lord's purpose upon Baal. Reader! let it serve to teach us that the Lord knoweth how to preserve his people in times of visitation. His chambers of safety are opened for them when shut to others. And mark this; when God hides his people he surely manifests himself. 1 Kings xix. 18.

29 ¶ Howbeit *from* the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, *to wit*, the golden calves that *were* in Bethel, and that *were* in Dan.

What a sad account is this! Though Jehu had grace to destroy Baal, he had not virtue to resist the golden calves of idolatry. Alas! what is man in his highest attainments! Oh! dearest Lord Jesus, where shall we look for perfection but to thee! Be thou my righteousness, wisdom, sanctification; for in thee I have all things.

30 And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou

hast done well in executing *that which is* right in mine eyes, *and* hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that *was* in mine heart, thy children of the fourth *generation* shall sit on the throne of Israel.

31 But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.

Jehu had done right in God's eyes in destroying the idols, and his reward was suited to it in temporal mercies to him and his children to the fourth generation. Here is nothing said in all this of any gracious act in the mind of Jehu, or of any gracious blessing from the Lord in consequence. Very evident, it is, from Jehu's following the sins of Jeroboam, that no act of grace had passed upon his heart. Many are blessed in the gifts of common providences, which are not made partakers of a saving change of heart. The Lord may, and the Lord doth bestow the nether springs of his bounty on the men of the earth. His upper springs of grace belong to his children.

32 In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel.

33 From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which *is* by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan.

Here begins the melancholy history of Israel, leading to the Babylonish captivity. For though it was more than 300 years before that event took place, yet Israel's glory from this time began to grow dim. Idolatry prevailed: and the Lord visited their iniquities. This Elijah had foretold concerning Hazael. See chap. viii. 12, 13.

34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

35 And Jehu slept with his fathers: and they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead.

36 And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria *was* twenty and eight years.

Here is but a short account of Jehu. He reigned 28 years, but how little is said of him. We are told in general of his might, but nothing

of his love to God. Alas! what is the sum total, in the lives of thousands, more than this! *Oh! Lord! so teach me to number my days as to apply my heart unto wisdom.* Psm. xc. 12.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us pause a moment over the perusal of this chapter, and, in the character of Jehu, mark the possibility of possessing great gifts, and great appearances of zeal for God's service, without any real possession of vital godliness. A man may cry out, as Jehu did, *Come, see my zeal for the Lord*; but if that zeal be truly put to the test, it will be as Solomon saith; *as the fining pot for silver and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise.* Let a man profess what he will, void of regeneration, yet all his performances spring from himself. A pool of water, when the rain descends plentifully, will swell and look large, but having no source, when the sun and the drought come on, it dries up. Oh! blessed Jesus! let all my zeal for thee and thy glory, arise from that well of water which thou hast promised, and which is from thyself, springing up unto everlasting life.

In the total overthrow of Ahab's family, mark, I beseech you, the sure termination of the ungodly. The Lord hath said in his covenant engagements, that he will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him! Reader! do not forget; the same promise which becomes sure to the believer, because of the faithfulness of God, makes his threatenings to the unbeliever, equally sure and certain. The Lord is not slack (saith an apostle) concerning his promise, as some men count slackness. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. Precious Jesus! where, in that tremendous day, would my soul find shelter, had I not thy righteousness to justify, and thy garment of salvation to cover me. Let a throne of grace witness for me, that now, even now I plead this, under all the accusations of conscience, the deceitfulness of a corrupt heart, the charges of Satan, and the threatenings of the broken law of God. And in that hour, when God shall arise to shake terribly the earth, then shall I plead it with full assurance of faith; nothing fearing any condemning sentence from my Judge, while standing secure in the justifying righteousness of God my Saviour, and triumphing in the covenant promises of my Father's sovereign grace. Lord Jesus! let the view of the treachery and deceitfulness of man's heart, as in the instance of Jehu, lead me to be everlastingly suspecting my own. And let a perfect conviction that thou, and thou only, art the righteousness of thy people, make me more and more earnest to know thee, to love thee, to live to thee, to walk in thee, to act faith upon thee, and to rejoice in thee as my portion, in time and to all eternity. Precious, precious Lord Jesus! even so, Amen.

## CHAP. XI.

### CONTENTS.

*The sacred historian in this chapter is relating the affairs of the kingdom of Judah. Athaliah destroys all the seed royal; one only es-*

*caped the general massacre, which is Jehoash. At six years of age Jehoida anoints him king. Athaliah is slain.*

AND when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal.

The character of this woman is given by the Holy Ghost in a short, but expressive manner: 2 Chron. xxvii. 7. Whether from a spirit of revenge, or from a spirit of cruelty, she perpetrated those wicked deeds, is not said. But we must look higher than the instrument. God had said to David, concerning the matter of Uriah, that the sword should not depart from his house. And, although the same God had graciously promised that the seed of David he would make to endure for ever, because that Christ, after the flesh, was to be the offspring of David, yet many of David's branches were lopped off. 2 Sam. xii. 10. Psalm lxxx. 29.

2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons, *which were* slain; and they hid him, *even* him and his nurse, in the bed chamber, from Athaliah, so that he was not slain.

3 And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land.

Observe, Reader, for the fulfilment of God's promise, how God in his providence preserved the seed of David! It is sweet to take notice of those things in the circumstances of our own private history. What numberless events might every man find in his own life, where Jesus is accomplishing his gracious promises by his gracious providences!

4 ¶ And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and shewed them the king's son.

It is probable that this Jehoida was high-priest, by whom the Lord was pleased to execute the purpose of his holy will. Jesus our High Priest, carries on all the grand councils and designs of Jehovah!

5 And he commanded them, saying, *This is* the thing that ye shall do; a third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house;

6 And a third part *shall be* at the gate of Sur;

and a third part at the gate behind the guard : so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down.

7 And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall keep the watch of the house of the LORD about the king.

8 And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand : and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain : and be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he cometh in.

9 And the captains over the hundreds did according to all *things* that Jehoiada the priest commanded : and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.

10 And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's spears and shields, that *were* in the temple of the LORD.

11 And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, *along* by the altar and the temple.

12 And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and *gave him* the testimony ; and they made him king, and anointed him ; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.

Young as Joash was, no doubt the sight of him stirred up the minds of the people to love him. And young as he was, the priest took care that the ceremony should be observed the same in his coronation, and with respect to the convention of the people, as if he had arrived to the maturity and ripeness of age for government. He is crowned, anointed ; the testimony of the word, even the law is put into his hand, agreeable to what the Lord commanded by Moses : Deut. xvii. 18, 19. And the people ratify their approbation of his government in shouting, *God save the king*. But, Reader ! doth not the view of this coronation, suggest to your mind one of an infinitely higher nature ? When the Lord Jesus is brought forth from obscurity to the sinner's view ; when we behold Jesus Christ of Nazareth, anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power,

as King in Zion; when the law of his gospel is given to us in him, and by him; and when the Covenant of redemption is revealed to the poor sinner in his blood; oh! what a double coronation is here, when Christ is crowned King of his church, and King in the sinner's heart! Surely every knee of his people is made with holy joy to bend before him, and every tongue is constrained to confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

13 And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard *and* of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the Lord.

14 And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner *was*, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: and Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, treason.

The delusion of Athaliah to go unarmed, unprotected, unsupported, shews at once how desperate her case was.

15 But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges: and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the Lord.

16 And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain.

I beg the Reader not to overlook the constant care to preserve the temple unpolluted. No human sacrifice was ever to be offered there but one: and that only in the end of the world to put away sin. And though this offering was the offering of the *body* of Jesus Christ once for all, yet his God-head gave virtue and efficacy to the sacrifice. Blessed Jesus! how hast thou by that one offering, perfected for ever them that are sanctified! Heb. x. 14.

17 And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people; between the king also and the people.

18 And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.

And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD.

19 And he took the rulers over hundreds, and the captains, and the guard, and all the people of the land: and they brought down the king from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.

20 And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet: and they slew Athaliah with the sword *beside* the king's house.

21 Seven years old *was* Jehoash when he began to reign.

Observe, in the death of Baal's priest, how human sacrifice suited their idol worship. For as Moses said, they sacrificed to devils, not to God. Deut. xxxii. 17.

#### REFLECTIONS.

It is delightful to observe how the Lord, in the worst of times, hath his servants ready to execute his gracious designs. He hath a Jehoash to hide when matters render it necessary; and a Jehoida to bring forward his chosen according to the counsel of his own will. Reader! how truly profitable is it thus to trace the Lord's hand in all his doings! And how encouraging, in all our intricate circumstances, to remember whose government we are under.

But, Reader! may you and I pass over the court of Judah in the history of Joash, and contemplate the Lord Jesus brought forth the lawful King of his people, against all the usurpation and tyranny of sin and Satan. Behold Jesus, shewed to us as the King's Son, the rightful heir of all things, by whom Jehovah made the worlds. Behold him in the glories of his Person, being the brightness of his Father's glory! Behold him as the great Covenant-head of his people set up from everlasting, although hidden, and his name secret through the several intermediate ages, until the fulness of time, appointed of the Father for his being revealed as a Saviour unto Israel. Contemplate him in all the Old Testament promises, types, and prophecies! See him in his convention with the Father for the purposes of redemption, when he stood up, like Joash, before the people and became our Covenant-head and King. Trace him in his incarnation, life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and glory! And what is he now? Surely he is the same. He stands in his temple as Joash stood by the pillar, as the manner was, to confirm the covenant, of which he himself is the whole sum and substance *for* his people, and *to* his people. He comes to us revealed in all his written word. He makes discovery of himself in his blessed gospel in all the

suitableness of his precious offices, relations, and characters. He is Jehovah's Standard and Ensign for his people, implying that he maketh war against all treasonable usurpations (like Athaliah's) for his people, and maketh them more than conquerors, through his grace and love, leading them on to victory! Hail! blessed, hoily, gracious, all-powerful Jesus! My soul would shout aloud, and I would clap my hands in testimony of the greatest joy, that Jesus reigns. Be thou, dearest sovereign, Lord and Master, be thou my God and King; and let all enemies which would rise up in treasonable rebellion against thy princely government, like Athaliah, be laid hands upon, without the temple, and slain before his face. Amen. Amen.

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## CHAP. XII.

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter contains the history of Jehoash's reign and death. He governed well during the life of Jehoiada, but after was led away from his uprightness. His death was induced by the treachery of his servants.*

**I**N the seventh year of Jehu Jehoash began to reign; and forty years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zibia of Beer-sheba.

Whether the reign of Jehoash is reckoned from the seventh year of his life, when Jehoiada brought him forth to the people and anointed him king, is not said, but seems likely. And if so, he died in the prime of life, at the age of 47.

2 And Jehoash did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him.

3 But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

The approbation of the Lord to his conduct, must be considered comparatively, for as idolatry was not totally abolished, this could not be pleasing to the Lord. How delightful is the account given in this indirect way concerning Jehoiada, whose influence was so beneficial to the king. Oh! how gracious is it in the Lord, when he giveth the experience and wisdom of age to guide youth!

4 And Jehoash said to the priest, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the LORD, *even* the money of every one that passeth *the account*, the money that every man is set at, *and* all the money that cometh into

any man's heart to bring into the house of the LORD,

5 Let the priests take *it* to them, every man of his acquaintance: and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found.

6 But it was *so*, *that* in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house.

7 Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the *other* priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore receive no *more* money of your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house.

8 And the priests consented to receive no *more* money of the people, neither to repair the breaches of the house.

9 But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the LORD: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the LORD.

10 And it was *so*, when they saw that *there was* much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the house of the LORD.

11 And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the LORD: and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the LORD.

12 And to masons, and hewers of stone, and to buy timber, and hewed stone to repair the breaches of the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair *it*.

13 Howbeit there were not made for the house of the LORD bowls of silver, snuffers, basons, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of the LORD.

14 But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the LORD.

15 Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully.

16 The trespass money and sin money, was not brought into the house of the LORD: it was the priests'.

If the Reader will consult the parallel history, as it relates to Jehoash, (2 Chron. xxiv.) he will discover several things connected with it, which are here omitted. For brevity's sake I refer therefore to the chapter itself, without enlarging upon it. The injuries the temple had received may well be accounted for, when we consider, since the days of Solomon, what idolatries had crept in among the people. No doubt the house of God was sadly neglected. Reader! how precious is the thought that Jesus is our temple, concerning whom there can be nothing ruinous. Lord Jesus! do thou bless and keep the church, which is thy body, *the fulness of him which filleth all in all.* Eph. i. 22, 23.

17 ¶ Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem.

18 And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold *that was* found in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and in the king's house, and sent *it* to Hazael king of Syria: and he went away from Jerusalem.

Let the Reader recollect how the Lord had been gradually preparing the minds of his people for the desolation of Jerusalem, which had been long threatened. Hence Israel's kings are dispirited. Guilt breeds fear. While Israel loved the Lord, and feared the Lord, no enemy could dare insult the Lord's people. But now enemies arise from every quarter. How strikingly was that scripture fulfilled; Deut. xxviii. 15, &c.

19 ¶ And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all

that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

20 And his servants arose, and made a conspiracy, and slew Joash in the house of Millo, which goeth down to Silla.

21 For Jozachar the son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad the son of Shomer, his servants, smote him, and he died; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

Here is but little account of Jehoash. How very different was the close of his life, to the promising appearance of it when crowned king. The Reader cannot but have remarked how his name is altered in the several parts of his history. His name was Joash originally. But at the coronation, and in the beginning of his reign he is called Jehoash. And in the close again it is Joash. Perhaps the very honorable distinction prefixed to Joash, of the Je, was intended as a mark of the Lord's favour. And as the termination of his life was dishonorable, particularly so in his conduct towards a prophet of the Lord, in the person of a son of his benefactor, Jehoiada; (see 2 Chron. xxiv. 17—25.) this prefixed honor to his name was taken from him. We have a similar instance; Jerem. xxii. 24, 28.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! I would wish for myself, and, if the Lord pleases, may he graciously make it profitable to you also, in the review of this character of Joash, to consider what instructions we may gather from it considered with an eye to gospel times, and to the blessed redemption believers have in the Lord Jesus. When we see what a sad conclusion the life of Joash had, to so promising a beginning, it ought to induce inquiry into the circumstances of spiritual declensions, and the sad cause why it is that some who seemingly set out fair for the kingdom, flag and tire by the way. The apostle Paul, as the penman of the Holy Ghost, hath plainly assigned the reason in his third chapter to the Church of the Galatians; where he calls them foolish Galatians, because having begun in the Spirit, they afterwards thought to be made perfect by the flesh. When souls shift the foundation of their faith and hope, and leave their first-love, leave Jesus, and seek a partial justification before God in their own works, they soon find leanness in their souls. Reader! I charge it upon you, if you know any thing of Christ, desire to know nothing *but* Christ. Make him what he really is, the Alpha and Omega of your salvation; the Finisher as well as the Author of it; and you will do well. Did you not renounce every thing of your own, and what was in yourself, when you first came to Jesus, and would you now take somewhat of your own to purchase Christ? Did Jesus give life to your soul at the first, when by his Spirit he quickened you; and must he not give life

still? Having begun (saith the apostle) *in the Spirit are you so foolish as to seek to be made perfect in the flesh?* Oh! thou blessed, blessed Source of all our hopes and joys; thou precious Jesus, be thou all in all to the souls of thy people! Here, Lord, I beg once for all totally to renounce myself, and as I first came to thee guilty, poor, and wretched; so, Lord, I would come still. Blessed be thy name, for that thou hast taught me to know the plague of my own heart, and to see and be convinced that in myself, after all thou hast bestowed upon me, I am no more worthy now, than when thou didst pass by and *beheld me in my blood, and bid me live.* Yes! dearest Lord, I desire to lie low in the dust before thee in token of my nothingness and unworthiness, while hanging upon thee the full assurance of my salvation. And, Lord, let it be my daily desire to exercise every act of faith upon thee, to undertake nothing but in thy strength, and to seek acceptance only in thy blood and righteousness. And oh! may I know thee with increasing joy under that blessed character whereby thou art revealed to thy people, *as the Lord our righteousness;* being convinced that thou art made of God, to us *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that all my glorying may be in the Lord.*

## CHAP. XIII.

### CONTENTS.

*The most interesting part of this chapter is that which contains the death of the prophet Elisha. We have heard nothing of this man of God for some time. Here we are introduced to his history afresh, and the relation of his death. Here is also an account of the wicked reign of Jehoahaz, king of Israel. A remarkable circumstance is related of the revival of a dead man by being cast into the sepulchre of Elisha.*

**I**N the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years.

2 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin: he departed not therefrom.

Reader! what a melancholy relation, for the most part, is the history of Israel under their kings. The outline of it is little more than that such an one began to reign at such a period, that he reigned so long, and that he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father had done before him. And is this the general history of man? How precious ought Christ to be, who came to do away sin by the sacrifice of himself!

3 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand

of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael, *all their days*.

The relation in this verse is the natural consequence of sin; for *sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*.

4 And Jehoahaz besought the LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him: for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.

5 (And the LORD gave Israel a Saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as beforetime.

This is a sweet account in the midst of the narrative, as a beautiful spot of herbage amidst a barren heath. Observe how grace works; and how it brings forth God's mercy!

6 Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin, *but* walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria.)

7 Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.

8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

9 And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead.

The best improvement to be made of the short account of this man's reign is, that God's grace exceeded his undeservings. Sweet is that scripture, *the Lord delighteth in mercy*. Micah. vii. 18.

10 In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned sixteen years*.

11 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight

of the LORD; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin: *but* he walked therein.

12 And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

13 And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

What an awful character was Jeroboam! And what an awful monument, even to this hour, remains to his dreadful memory in the book of God! Reader! think what an aggravated state of guilt must that man be heaping to himself, whose transgressions operate after his death; the deadly fruit of whose iniquities, like a poisonous tree, kills for ages after he himself ceases to be!

14 ¶ Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

Our minds are relieved from the relation of such awful characters as we have lately been looking to, in the history of Jehoahaz and Joash, in the very mention of the name of Elisha, the man of God. And though we are now arrived to the period of his death in the history, yet *precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*. We are not told how old the prophet was, but we may pretty nearly gather the account, from the time in which he became a prophet to the time of his death. If the Reader looks back to the call of Elisha, he will discover that from the entrance on his prophetic office, which was when anointed by Elijah as his successor, (see 1 Kings xix. 16) to this period, was little short of 66 years. So that however young he then was, his ministry proves him to have died tolerably aged. Indeed many years seem to have passed in retirement, towards the close of his life, for we have no account of him since his anointing Jehu king. The visit of Joash, and the lamentation he made over the prophet in the prospect of his death, is striking. He used the same words as Elisha himself had done on the departure of Elijah. As if he had said; now thou art departing, all the praying strength of Israel is departing with thee. Oh! how blessed is it to be thus in truth esteemed. Gracious, praying souls among God's people are the salt of the earth, to preserve it from general putrefaction! They are the lights of the world, to prevent total darkness. Lord! I would take occasion to say, from this scene in the dying chamber of Elisha, Lord, raise up more Elishas, more faithful servants of our God, to stem the torrent of general corruption.

15 And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows.

16 And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand *upon it*: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.

17 And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened *it*. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed *them*.

18 And he said, Take the arrows. And he took *them*. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice and stayed.

19 And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed *it*: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria *but* thrice.

The prophet, though dying, had lost nothing of his prophetic spirit, nor of his faithfulness in God's covenant promises. Like another Elijah, he gives intimations, even in death, of what should follow. The typical representation of the arrow, and of smiting, fully explains what the prophet's meanings were.

20 ¶ And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.

Here is no account of the prophet's funeral, or of Israel's lamentation over him. Reader! doth not the death of the servants of our Lord always remind thee, and call forth holy joy in the heart, that though all die, yet Jesus the Master liveth for ever! Sweet thought! And oh! the preciousness of the consolation. *Thou art for ever the same*, blessed Jesus, *and thy years do not fail*. Heb. i. 12. The invasion by the Moabites the same year as the prophet died, is remarkable. Not unfrequently, before the Lord brings on a judgment on a guilty land, he houseth his servants. Noah was taken into the ark before the flood. Lot sent out of Sodom before the overthrow.

21 And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, *that*, behold, they spied a band *of men*; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Eli-

sha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

This miracle perhaps, (for I do not presume to decide upon it positively) had a double signification. Probably it might be intended to imply that the doctrine Elisha had delivered, gave life to the souls of the faithful, after the prophet himself was no more. And yet perhaps, more probably, the thing itself was intended to lead the minds of the Old Testament saints to the belief and assurance of the resurrection, in and by the Lord Jesus. Elisha was himself an eminent type of Christ. And as such, was not the revival of this dead man, whose body was hastily put, through fear of the band of the Moabites, into the sepulchre of Elijah, an emblem that from believers being buried with Christ in the likeness of his death, they shall be also in his likeness in the resurrection? Rom. vi. 5. John xi. 25.

22 But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.

23 And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.

24 So Hazael king of Syria died: and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead.

25 And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.

The chapter closes with a double aspect, Israel's unworthiness, and the Lord's grace and favor. Oh! dearest Jesus! how doth thy great, thy glorious salvation shine more conspicuously blessed, when beheld over the view of man's undeservings! Surely every thing in redemption-work loudly proclaims that sovereign truth, *where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.* Rom. v. 20, 21.

#### REFLECTIONS.

I PASS over every other consideration, which the perusal of this chapter affords, to take the larger, and more attentive review of the dying moments of the man of God, Elisha. No doubt the recollection of the wicked reign of Jehoahaz and Joash; the infinite clemency of a most gracious God, notwithstanding shewed to such impious monarchs

and their people, and the deliverances wrought out for them by the Lord; no doubt these contemplations would open a large door for improvement. And indeed, I pray the Reader not wholly to pass them by. May the Holy Ghost sanctify them to the soul both of Writer and Reader. But I pass the more quickly over those things, to take a more deliberate view of the dying prophet, which this chapter records. And as with this chapter, the life and ministry of Elisha terminates, methinks I would gather up, from the fragments of a life so illustrious, and so highly honored, somewhat to contemplate to the honor of the saint, and yet infinitely more, to gather therefrom in reference to the Saviour.

And shall I, blessed Spirit of all truth, shall I humbly venture to ask, while lying low in the dust before thee, is there not somewhat in thy servant the prophet Elisha, which forms a resemblance, however imperfect and far short of the original, to the person, character, and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ? Didst thou, bless'd Spirit, graciously design that thy church should be led to such a contemplation! Look then, my soul, while waiting the Holy Ghost's teaching, look to Elisha, and see whether he was not intended to shadow forth somewhat of Jesus, in his life and ministry!

A double portion of the Spirit was promised Elisha at the river Jordan, when entering on his prophetic office, on the departure of Elijah. And was it not at the same river the Holy Ghost descended on the Person of the Lord Jesus, at his entrance on his ministry, when *the Spirit was given to him without measure*? Did Elisha divide the waters hither and thither with the mantle of Elijah, in testimony that the Lord God of Elijah was with him: and are not the waters of death, and the depths of destruction dried up, and a passage made through Jordan for Christ's ransomed to pass over, by his robe of righteousness, which forms the justifying covering and mantle of all his people before the Lord Jehovah for ever? Did Elisha work miracles; heal the waters, and cure the barren ground by the cruse of salt: and hath not our Jesus healed all the springs of bitterness in us and our corrupt nature, and by the salt of grace, and the covenant blessings, his precious and finished redemption-work hath wrought in us, and for us; hath he not brought in such everlasting healing to the nations, that henceforth, Jehovah himself hath said, and confirmed it with an oath, *There shall be no more dearth, or barren land, for in Christ Jesus his people shall be saved with an everlasting righteousness, and shall be neither ashamed nor confounded, world without end!* Did Elisha multiply the pot of oil, raise the Shunammite's son; restore the poisoned food to wholesomeness; feed an hundred men with twenty loaves; cure Naaman, the Syrian, of his leprosy in mercy, and fasten it on Gehazi in punishment: and did he those great deeds in the name of the Lord? Yes! all these and many more, in confirmation of his commission, in whose name he acted; and, like another Moses, was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. But as for thee, thou blessed Jesus, thou, as a Son over thine own house, and as the Lord and Sovereign of Elisha, to whom he, and all that went before, and all that followed, ministered to thy coming; thou hast indeed in an endless perpetuity of miracles, not only during the days of thy flesh upon earth, but now in the everlasting possession and exercise of thy glory in heaven, still carrying on the same gracious and blessed designs in the

accomplishment of thy redemption. The widow's oil which the prophet multiplied, might indeed shadow forth the oil of grace, which thou art dispensing, by thy Spirit, upon all thy people; but oh! how weak a representation of the fulness, by which thou art for ever supplying the impoverished state of the insolvent, and the wretched. Elisha, by thy command, did raise the Shunammite's dead son. But thou, blessed Jesus, art raising millions of dead sinners to a new and spiritual life, which are by nature dead in trespasses and sins. Elisha to manifest the power and grace of the God in whose name he acted, might be permitted to convert the poisoned broth into wholesome food. But thou, Almighty Jesus, in thine own power, and by thine own sovereign mercy, hast converted the very poison of sin into streams of salvation: by death thou hast destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and hast delivered them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage. Hail! holy, blessed, precious, Lord Jesus! Lamb of God who hath all power in heaven and in earth. Not one or two only of widowed women, leprous Syrians, or famished men hath thy grace and mercy been manifested to by the ministry of thy servants, but millions of souls and bodies of thy redeemed, amidst all their poverty, leprosy, and famished state of endless ruin, but for thy gracious interposition, hast thou restored to life, and health, and joy, and liberty. *Men shall be blessed in thee, and all nations shall call thee blessed.* Here let me bow down before thee thou Lord God of the prophets, Elisha's God and Saviour, *in whom, and through whom, and for whom, all his ministry was exercised.* And in the view of his life, and indeed of all thy servants who shadowed forth thy coming, may this one gracious truth be fully brought home to the soul, and made blessed both to him that writes, and him that reads, that to him, even to Jesus, gave all the prophets witness, that through thy name, dearest Lord Jesus, *whosoever believeth in thee, shall receive remission of sins.*

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## CHAP. XIV.

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter brings some consolation to the mind in the history of the kings of Israel and Judah, in relating to us the good reign of Amaziah. He is slain, however, by a conspiracy; and is succeeded in the kingdom by Azariah. Here is an account also of the reign of Jeroboam king of Israel.*

**I**N the second year of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel reigned Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah.

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

3 And he did *that which was right in the sight of*

the LORD, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did.

4 Howbeit the high places were not taken away: as yet the people did sacrifice and burnt incense on the high places.

5 And it came to pass, as soon as the kingdom was confirmed in his hand, that he slew his servants which had slain the king his father.

6 But the children of the murderers he slew not: according unto that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein the Lord commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

7 He slew of Edom in the valley of salt ten thousand, and took Selah by war, and called the name of it Joktheel unto this day.

8 Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one another in the face.

9 And Jehoash the 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.

10 Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory *of this*, and tarry at home: for why shouldest thou meddle to *thy* hurt, that thou shouldest fall, *even* thou and Judah with thee?

11 But Amaziah would not hear. Therefore Jehoash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the face at Beth-shemesh, which *belongeth* to Judah.

12 And Judah was put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to their tents.

13 And Jehoash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash the son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh, and came to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner gate, four hundred cubits.

14 And he took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels *that were* found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and hostages, and returned to Samaria.

15 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, and his might, and how he fought with Amaziah king of Judah, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

16 And Jehoash slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and Jeroboam his son reigned in his stead.

17 ¶ And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years.

18 And the rest of the acts of Amaziah *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

19 Now they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem: and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there.

20 And they brought him on horses: and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David.

21 ¶ And all the people of Judah took Azariah, which *was* sixteen years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah.

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

The twenty five years of Amaziah's reign may be brought into a narrow compass. His history, as is here related, consisted chiefly in restor-

ing order in the temple service, by which it is said he did right in the sight of the Lord, though not like David. The other parts are much like that of others in extending his authority, and in a wish to extend his conquests, in which, however, he was worsted. The parable of the thistle and cedar, which Jehoash made use of to correct Amaziah's folly, was well chosen. And the event corresponded to its figure. But what I would chiefly desire the Reader to remark while passing through these chapters, of war, and desolation, and the sword, is to view in them the sad consequences of a fallen state. Even in the history of Israel, the nation whom God chose for himself from all the earth, we see the same sad ruin by reason of sin. No man hath ever contemplated to the full, the dreadful situation to which our nature has been reduced by the fall. And never will it be fully ascertained in this life. And hence no one, not even the redeemed who feel the precious effects of regeneration, can ever while they remain in a body of sin and death calculate the glorious consequences of redemption by Jesus. Oh! thou blessed, gracious, dearest Lord Jesus! when shall I know to the full thy loveliness, and the immense mercies thou hast accomplished for thy people to the praise of thy Father's grace, and the purchase of thy blood?

23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, *and reigned forty and one years.*

I cannot pass over this verse without remarking the name of this king of Israel. One should have thought that the name of Jeroboam was so detestable that it would have been shunned with horror. Was it in presumption, as if defying the Lord? Alas! to what a state of sin was Israel at this time reduced?

24 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

25 He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which *was* of Gathhepher.

26 For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, *that it was* very bitter: for *there was* not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel.

27 And the LORD said not that he would blot

out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

28 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, *which belonged to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.*

29 And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, *even with the kings of Israel*; and Zechariah his son reigned in his stead.

The most remarkable events here recorded are concerning the Lord's preserving mercy to Israel, who though giving them up to their enemies, and about to suffer them when the time arrived to go into Babylon, yet would still preserve them a name. *Destroy it not*, said he that looked on, *for there is still a blessing in it.* Jesus, the promised seed, is in it. Oh! precious truth! Isaiah lxxv. 8. And the ministry of the prophet Jonah is worth regarding in this place, for he exercised his ministry about this time. Though the book of his prophecy which the Holy Ghost hath caused to be preserved in the church contains the account of his commission to Nineveh only, yet we find from this chapter Jonah ministered also to Israel. See Jonah Chap. i. to the end. But I beg the Reader, in the perusal of this chapter, to mark the expression concerning Israel's misery. *The Lord saw the affliction of Israel that it was very great.* Yes! their affliction was very great. But observe, there is not a word said that their sorrow for sin, or their repentance for seeking pardon, was proportioned. Alas! alas! punishment, however extreme, or sorrow, however aggravated, will leave the heart just where it found it, as hardened as ever, unless the Lord gives repentance to Israel and remission of sins. Oh! precious Jesus! thou, that art exalted *as a prince, and a Saviour*, bestow, Lord, those ascension-gifts upon my soul. Grant me that *true godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of*, and keep from me that *sorrow of the world which worketh death.* 2 Cor. vii. 10.

#### REFLECTIONS.

BEHOLD, my soul, in the ruined state of Israel, which this chapter presents to thy view, the sure consequence of sin and the evil thereof. Who ever hardened himself against God, and prospered?—Is this Israel whom the Lord brought out of Egypt; carried him on eagles' wings; rained manna from heaven for his food, and gave water from the rock to his thirst; led him by a pillar of a cloud by day, and sheltered him in a pillar of fire by night? Is this the same? Alas! *how is the gold become dim! how is the fine gold changed!*

But behold also, my soul, the bowels of mercies of Israel's covenant God. The Lord saw the affliction of Israel. And will not the Lord send

deliverance to his people? Yes! blessed be his name. The deliverance is only in him. He hath sent a Saviour, and a great one, and he hath delivered them. Oh! for grace to receive Jesus, to believe in him, to rest upon him, and on the bended knee, in transports of rejoicing, to bless God for his unspeakable gift!

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## CHAP. XV.

### CONTENTS.

*The history of Israel and Judah is carried on through this chapter. And this is the period in which the prophets Hosea and Isaiah exercised their ministry. Here is a succession of several kings both in Israel and Judah.*

**I**N the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign.

2 Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Jecholiah of Jerusalem.

3 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done;

4 Save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places.

5 ¶ And the LORD smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house. And Jotham the king's son *was* over the house, judging the people of the land.

6 And the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

7 So Azariah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

The review of the parallel history in the 2nd book of the Chronicles, will form the best comment on the history of Azariah. Though it be said he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, it is intended by the expression only to imply that he did not abjure the worship of

the Lord God of Israel and set up idols. It should seem that his name was more generally known by that of Uzziah, as he is uniformly called in the Chronicles; and the leprosy with which he was smitten is there more particularly recorded. See 2 Chron. xxvi, throughout.

8 In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did Zechariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months.

9 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin,

10 And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

11 And the rest of the acts of Zechariah, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

12 This *was* the word of the LORD which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth *generation*. And so it came to pass.

13 Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah: and he reigned a full month in Samaria.

14 For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

15 And the rest of the acts of Shallum, and his conspiracy which he made, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

16 Then Menahem smote Tiphseh, and all that *were* therein, and the coasts thereof from Tirzah: because they opened not *to him*, therefore he smote *it*; and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up.

17 In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah

king of Judah, began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel, *and reigned* ten years in Samaria.

18 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

19 And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand.

20 And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, *even* of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land.

21 And the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

22 And Menahem slept with his fathers; and Pekahiah his son reigned in his stead.

23 In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* two years.

24 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

25 But Pekah the son of Remeliah, a captain of his, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob and Arieah, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites: and he killed him, and reigned in his room.

26 And the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

27 In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned twenty years.*

28 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin.

29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

30 And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.

31 And the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

32 ¶ In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign.

33 Five and twenty years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok.

34 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.

35 Howbeit the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places. He built the higher gate of the house of the LORD.

36 Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

37 In those days the LORD began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah.

I bring the whole into this compass, not only for the sake of brevity, but because the observations which are suited to one reign more or less will suit them all. Short as this chapter is, the events of it include a period of near 70 years; in which we have a succession of monarchs short in their lives, short in their reign, and for the most part full of evil. If the Reader feels disposed to examine into the length of each, a short calculation will soon enable him to ascertain the whole. But what I would chiefly beg my Reader to remark on the occasion is, the goodness of the Lord in watching over Israel, notwithstanding their rebellion, by the ministry of his servants the prophets. Hosea's whole volume is a succession of Sermons, delivered, as the title page tells us, in the days of Uzziah and Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash king of Israel. Hos. i. 1. Isaiah prophesied at much the same time. Joel and Amos were also contemporaries in this service. The Lord sent his servants rising early, and speaking, though they would not hear; and therefore he brought evil upon them in a progressive way, from one calamity to another, until the captivity of Babylon, which put a period to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. But Reader! one sweet thought ariseth to relieve the mind of the believer under all; and that is, the ruin of kingdoms, and monarchies, the putting down one and setting up another, was all intended as preparatory to that glorious event when He should come, whose kingdom should be an everlasting kingdom, and his empire, which should never be destroyed. When by events the most unpromising, and according to human ideas impossible, *the stone should be cut out of the mountain without hands*; and the God of heaven, even our Father, should raise up, in the house of David, his Son Jesus, and *send him to bless his people in turning away every one of them from their iniquities*. Hail, blessed Jesus! in thee we see that precious promise fulfilled; *In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt, and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria, the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance*. Dan. ii. 44, 45. Acts iii. 25, 26. Isaiah xix. 24, 25.

38 And Jotham slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! can you review the successive history of these kings without emotion! is there not here enough to teach any man, and every man, the folly, emptiness, and unsatisfying nature of all human greatness void of the grace and favour of God? Is this all the history of greatness that these men were born, that they began at such a period to

reign, that they reigned so long, did evil for the most part in the sight of the Lord, and at their death were succeeded by others! Alas, alas! if this be the only arithmetic of human greatness, who would covet the envied purple, or look with longing desires to be among the higher ranks of this life.

Blessed Jesus! how sweetly in this instance, as in every other review of the present circumstances of human life, doth thy person, and our interest and relationship in thee, appear. Allied to thee, dearest Lord, thy people are royal indeed; for they are begotten of God the Father, the king of heaven, and earth, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away: they are the children and brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; and by the Holy Ghost made partakers of the divine nature, married to Jesus, and entitled by him to all the portions and revenues of royalty, and to a crown of glory hereafter that shall endure for ever. Reader! pause and contemplate their privileges! Behold! see, even now, amidst all the disadvantages of their earthly state, though poor in outward circumstances, and the world owns them not, but their mother's children are angry with them; yet are they still but like the heirs of a kingdom in disguise, going home to glory, and each one of them bears the features, and resembles the children of a king. Their spiritual clothing, like the king's daughter, *is all glorious within*. The imputed righteousness of their husband and their Lord, is royal apparel indeed. Their provision in spirituals is all heavenly, being the bread of God which came down from heaven, the flesh and blood of Jesus; they ride moreover in the royal chariot of the Lord Jesus, the pillows whereof are silver, the bottom thereof gold, *the covering of it of purple, and the midst thereof paved with love*. They have a royal guard also to attend and guard their persons, angels being their ministering servants, and the Lord himself their God, their glory.

Think, then, ye humble followers of the humble and lowly Jesus, think of your high privileges in him, and his lawful right, who is *the Lord your righteousness*. And if ye are indeed *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*; shew forth the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Live as children of the Lord. And seeing that *ye have received a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*.

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## CHAP. XVI.

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter is wholly spent in recording the evil reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. The close of the chapter brings in a relief to the mind in the introduction of his son Hezekiah, who succeeded him.*

**I**N the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign.

2 Twenty years old *was* Ahaz when he began to

reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father.

3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel.

4 And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

What an awful account both the histories of Judah and Israel furnish! the succession of the kings, for the most part, is but a succession of evil. Idolatry, during the reign of Ahaz, seems to have been advanced to its height. The Reader will have a larger view of the impiety of Ahaz, if he consults and compares with what is related of him in the parallel history, in the 28th chapter of the 2d book of Chronicles.

5 Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome *him*.

6 At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.

7 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, saying, I *am* thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me.

8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the kings house, and sent *it for* a present to the king of Assyria.

9 And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried *the people of* it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

The prophet Isaiah hath given us an account of this transaction in the

7th chapter of his prophecy. The Reader will do well, therefore, to consult the passage in Isaiah's writings. But what I would more particularly request the Reader to observe in that chapter of the prophet is, the very gracious message which the Lord at this time sent to Ahaz. Notwithstanding the daring impiety of this man, yet, as a branch of the house of David, the Lord sends to him a sign of his mercy in the promise of the Messiah. How gracious was it in the Lord to treat any longer with such degenerate creatures! how increasingly gracious at such a time to point to the remedy for sin in the promise of a Redeemer! and how abundantly and astonishingly gracious thus to refresh the souls of the people with the outlines of Jesus's person and character. Reader! I beseech you to turn to the account of it; Isaiah vii. 10—16. And when you have read of God's grace, go on to read of his sure judgments to the despisers of his mercy; verse 17 to the end.

10 And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that *was* at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.

11 And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made *it* against king Ahaz came from Damascus.

12 And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.

13 And he burnt his burnt offering and his meat offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings, upon the altar.

14 And he brought also the brazen altar, which *was* before the LORD, from the forefront of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the altar.

15 And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering, and the evening meat offering, and the king's burnt sacrifice, and his meat offering, with the burnt offering of all the

people of the land, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brasen altar shall be for me to enquire *by*.

16 Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

17 ¶ And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brasen oxen that *were* under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.

18 And the covert for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the LORD for the king of Assyria.

19 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

20 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

I include the whole of the remainder of the life of Ahaz in one view, because it only leads the mind to discover the progress of his impiety until the measure of it was full. Reader! can we contemplate, without horror, the daring conduct of this man, after so gracious a message as he received from God, to go and take the copy of an idolatrous altar from among the heathen dunghill gods of Damascus. We hardly meet with a parallel instance of wickedness among all the kings of Israel and Judah. And what a wretched, worthless, time-serving priest must have been this Urijah! Alas! *As with the people, so with the priest. As with the servant, so with his master; the land is utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled.* Isaiah xxiv. 2, &c. If the Reader will consult Isaiah's prophecy, in several places he will see how the prophet bewails the sad times of degeneracy in Ahaz's reign. Isaiah xiv. 24—28.

#### REFLECTIONS.

How painful a thought is it to behold in this history of Israel and Judah the sad proofs of a fallen state! whether we read of one king or another, the general features of all are the same; *All have sinned and come short of God's glory!* But with what increased distress do we behold in the priests of God, as in this awful character of Urijah, the

dreadful apostacy of mankind! and in the end, what must be the awful consequence. *Begin at my sanctuary*, saith God in his judgments. And if judgment begin at the house of God, what must the end be of them that obey not the gospel of Jesus? For if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Ye ministers of Jesus, think of these things. And dare be zealous for God's honour and glory, though it expose you to the hatred and anger of men.

But how is my soul relieved from contemplating such a king as Ahaz, and such an High Priest as Urijah, in calling to mind the prophet's commission when sent to Ahaz to proclaim to him the approach of that hour, when the Lord would fulfil that promise of raising up to himself a faithful priest, who should do according to what was in the heart of the Lord. Precious Jesus! thou art indeed a priest upon thy throne. And all the impiety of Ahaz, and the worthlessness of Urijah, I would lose sight of in thy faithfulness and truth. Thou art the very one which the Lord gave as a sign to Ahaz: thou art Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature, the hope of glory! Blessed assurance! for, as God the work of redemption is neither too great, nor too heavy, for thee; and as man, God dwelling with us, and being one in our nature, thou wilt be on our side, and both accomplish and render effectual the salvation thou hast undertaken. So that we may cry out, *If God be for us who shall be against us?* It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God. Nothing therefore shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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## CHAP. XVII.

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter relates to the history of the kingdom of Israel. Hosea's wicked reign is recorded, and which terminates the Israelitish kingdom; for the captivity takes place in the destruction of Samaria, after a period of about 260 years. A mixture of religions takes place also on the event of the captivity.*

**I**N the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years.

2 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

3 Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents:

4 And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of

Assyria, as *he had done* year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

5 ¶ Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor *by* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

The Reader will do well, while reading this chapter, to keep in view what the prophets have said concerning the events recorded in those days. The prophets Isaiah and Hosea particularly merit our closest attention. The latter, in his first and second chapters, hath woefully described this unchurching of Israel; and at the same time comforted the chosen of the Lord with the sure prospects of their becoming a church again. God had indeed called them by the prophet, Lo-ammi, as being no longer his people, but he still promised that after he had brought them into the wilderness, and pleaded with them there, they should be again the Ammai, the beloved of the Lord. Let the Reader study those sweet chapters while looking at this history of Israel, and indeed the whole of Hosea's prophecy, all of which must have been delivered before the captivity. The siege of three years before Samaria was taken, seemed to speak God's reluctancy to give them up; *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?* Hosea xi. 8. If the Reader be not thoroughly acquainted with the history of this event of the captivity of Israel, it may not be amiss to observe, that the ten tribes which constituted the kingdom of Israel, were all carried away in this captivity; and though no doubt many of each tribe, as individuals, have been gathered from the general loss, yet never to this hour have they returned. They are scattered, and perhaps dispersed in every county under heaven; yet a time is promised when *the deliverer shall arise from Zion*; and to whom, as the glorious Shiloh, *the gathering of the people shall be*. But from the period of this captivity all the tribes, except Judah and Levi, were taken away and unchurched. Let the Reader consult those precious scriptures which foretel their recovery: Hosea iii. 4, 5. Rom. xi. 15, 26. Rev. vii. 4, 8.

7 For *so* it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,

8 And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children

of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

9 And the children of Israel did secretly *those* things that *were* not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree:

11 And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as *did* the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger:

12 For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, *and by* all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments *and* my statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

14 Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that *were* round about them, *concerning* whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them.

16 And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, *even* two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.

17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

20 And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.

21 For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin.

22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them.

23 Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

Though the Lord is not accountable to any of his creatures for what he doth; yet is he graciously pleased to manifest the equity of his dealings, and to prove, even to the conviction of the sinner himself, that the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He appeals, by his servants the prophets, to the minds of men, in proof of this. It was not the king of Assyria that could have ruined Israel, had not the Lord commissioned him. The Assyrian (as Isaiah saith) was the rod of his anger, and the staff in the Assyrian's hand was the indignation of the Lord. It was the Lord that sent the Assyrian against Israel, as an hypocritical nation; and it was the Lord which gave Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the robbers, against whom Israel had sinned. See Isaiah x. 5, 6. Isaiah xlii. 24, 25. Reader! while you peruse these solemn scriptures, and behold God's just judgments executed upon his own people; read with trembling. Though God hath promised in covenant engagements by his dear son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that the redeemed shall not be cast off for ever; yet the seed of Jesus, if they break his

laws, and keep not his commandments, the Lord will visit *their offences with a rod, and their sins with scourges*. Psalm lxxxix. 30—32. I do not find in the whole bible a promise to give encouragement to a loose and careless life. But on the contrary, though the church of Christ must stand and shall prevail against all opposition, yet that church may be taken from one spot to flourish more in another. The golden candlestick is a moveable thing in the Lord's house. Rev. ii. 5.

24 ¶ And the king of Assyria brought *men* from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed *them* in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

25 And *so* it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew *some* of them.

26 Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.

27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land.

28 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.

29 Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put *them* in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

30 And the men of Babylon made Succoth-

benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima,

31 And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

32 So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

33 They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.

34 Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;

35 With whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them:

36 But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out arm, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice.

37 And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods.

38 And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods.

39 But the LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.

40 Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner.

41 So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

See, Reader! the awful desolation of Samaria! Israel would not love her one true and most gracious God, and a God in covenant with her; therefore she shall here set up a multitude of dunghill gods, as Moses described them, that newly came up, whom their fathers feared not, and had existence before them. Reader! is it possible to behold the human mind capable of such a degradation, and not be convinced of the universal ruin and fall of our nature? Deut. xxxii, 17. Hosea x. 1—8.

#### REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, my soul, over this chapter, and behold the awful visitations of God upon his own people. Well may every truly awakened soul take part in what he reads here, and tremble lest, for the wickedness of our own land, the Lord should send similar judgments. Are we better than they? (saith the apostle upon an occasion not unlike this) No, in no wise. For he hath before concluded all under sin. And though from the relation God the Father stands in to his people in his dear Son; though from the ransom he hath received from our Almighty Surety, the everlasting welfare of the regenerate is secure; yet for the honour of his holy name, to prevent the abuse of his covenant-mercy, and for the holiness of his nature, God will correct (and to what extent who shall say) the unhumbled state of his people in their sins and transgressions.

Reader! are you a real follower of the Lord Jesus Christ? Hath the Holy Ghost convinced you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment? Hath he led you to the precious Jesus for the whole of your salvation? And if so; can you be unmoved in the view of the present state of the church in this highly favoured land, and behold the languishing condition of Zion among us, unconcerned. How did holy men of old feel on such occasions? *My flesh trembleth* (saith one of them) *for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments!* *For these things* (saith another) *I weep, mine eyes run down with tears.* *When I heard* (saith a third) *my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones.* Are you unmoved! Oh! for grace from him who hath the residue of the Spirit, to be earnest in prayer with him for his sparing mercy!

Precious Jesus! where shall we flee, to whom shall we come, but to thee? We are indeed a guilty, sinful land, a wretched, unworthy people. We are sadly gone away from thee. We are a race of evil-doers, children that are corrupters. We have sinned, what shall we say, O thou Preserver of men? But, Lord, help us to return. Let thy grace

induce, in all ranks, a spirit of reform. Oh! thou exalted Prince and Saviour! pour out thine ascension gifts of repentance, and remission of sins. Bring us before thee, looking with an eye of faith to thy blood, beholding thee as the Lamb that hath been slain, and wearing thy Priesthood still. And oh! be thou very jealous for this land, and heal thy people. Come, gracious Lord, return to thy people with pardons to bless, with grace to purify, with love to allure; and draw our hearts unto thee. And let us hear those soul reviving words; *I am returned to the British Jerusalem in mercy.* Then may our souls answer to the words of thy grace, and say; *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage. The Lord will not retain his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again. He will have compassion upon us. He will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.*

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## CHAP. XVIII.

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter contains the account of Hezekiah, and his good reign. His destruction of idolatry. A further account of the captivity of the people of Israel. The chapter, after this, returns to the relation of the history of Hezekiah. Jerusalem is besieged by Sennacherib.*

**N**OW it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.

2 Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Abi, the daughter of Zechariah.

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

4 ¶ He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *any* that were before him.

6 For he clave to the LORD, *and* departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.

7 And the LORD was with him; *and* he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

The Reader should carefully keep in view, in order to have a clear apprehension of those historical parts of the Bible, that the history of the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, is so incorporated in one and the same chapter, that, unless properly attended to, an ordinary Reader will find himself frequently at a loss to distinguish. In the preceding chapter we were called upon to notice the history of Israel, and there we read the end of it, as a kingdom, in Samaria being taken, and the people carried away captive. We are now led to the history of Judah, and Hezekiah, the good king, is brought before us in the account of his reign. One of the most interesting remarks in the opening of his history is, that notwithstanding the worthlessness of his fathers, Ahaz, and Urijah, the piety of Hezekiah felt no check. The Holy Ghost places him in the highest rank. No king in Judah ever equalled him. But while we pay all due respect to so illustrious a character, let us not fail to keep in view the cause. Is it not God that worketh in his people, both to will and to do of his good pleasure? Holy Spirit! to thee would I look, as the first predisposing cause of all grace. We bless thee, Lord, for the gift. And we bless thee that thou hast given us to discover thy gracious hand in it. And we desire that all the glory may be thine. The destruction of the brazen serpent, may perhaps need some little explanation. It was Moses that erected it: it was of divine appointment: and it had a blessed reference to Jesus! See Numb. xxi. 7—9. compared with John iii. 14, 15. But I refer the Reader for observations on this to the Commentary on the 21st of Numbers. In process of time, the children of Israel, forgetting that it was only typical, and as a commemoration of mercies, made it an idol of worship. Hezekiah, therefore, brake it in pieces, proving thereby, that it was *Nehushtan*, that is nothing but brass.—How delightful an account that is; *the Lord was with Hezekiah, and prospered him*. Blessed Jesus! remember thy sweet promise of being always with thy people. Oh! what a cluster of promises to this effect, hast thou given in those words. Reader, pray turn to them: Matt. xxviii. 20. John xiv. 23, 26.

8 He smote the Philistines, *even* unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

9 ¶ And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which *was* the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, *that* Shalma-

neser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it.

10 And at the end of three years they took it: *even* in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken.

11 And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor *by* the river of Gozan, and in the city of the Medes:

12 Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, *and* all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear *them*, nor do *them*.

This is a kind of parenthesis to what went before, and what follows: for it repeats what the former chapter related, the capture of Samaria; and is no further connected with the history of Judah, than as it shews, from the success the king of Assyria had obtained over Israel, it opened, as he thought, an easier way to the destruction of Judah.

13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

14 And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou putttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

15 And Hezekiah gave *him* all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house.

16 At that time did Hezekiah cut off *the gold from* the doors of the temple of the LORD, and *from* the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

This Sennacherib must have been the successor to Shalmaneser. And perhaps his victory over Samaria prompted him to suppose, that he should be conqueror of Jerusalem. And though it is said the Lord prospered Hezekiah whithersoever he went, yet we find the Lord was pleased, in the opening of this siege, to give Sennacherib a temporary

triumph, with a view to a more signal display of his own Almighty power, in the salvation of his servant, and his people. Reader! it is one of the Lord's usual plans of mercy, for the exercise of his peoples' faith, and for the manifestation of his own grace and love, to let us see what poor creatures we are, and should for ever remain, but for him. Poor Hezekiah needed this lesson, it seems; for when the Lord permitted this enemy to triumph a little, instead of looking to the Lord, he made a pitiful compromise, and bought off the foe with a present. Alas! what poor creatures we are!

17 And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rab-shakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which *is* in the high-way of the fuller's field.

18 And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.

19 And Rab-shakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence *is* this wherein thou trustest?

20 Thou sayest, (but *they are but* vain words,) *I have* counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

21 Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, *even* upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so *is* Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.

22 But if ye say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: *is* not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?

23 Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to

my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

24 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

25 Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

Hezekiah is soon taught what a base wretch he had to do with, who not only took Hezekiah's gold, and then turned against him, with more force, in the perfidy of his heart, but even charged Hezekiah with robbery, for taking the gold to give him from the house of the Lord. The Reader will do no violence to the scripture of this history, if he spiritualizes the whole of this blasphemers speech, as the language of the devil, in his temptations of our poor nature. Doth he not in effect say the same thing, and pretend, when he transforms himself into an angel of light, that he hath his commission from the Lord?

26 Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiab, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand *it*: and talk not with us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that *are* on the wall.

27 But Rab-shakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? *hath he not sent me* to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?

28 Then Rab-shakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria:

29 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand:

30 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us,

and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

31 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make *an agreement* with me by a present and come out to me, and *then* eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern:

32' Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us.

33 Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

34 Where *are* the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?

35 Who *are* they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?

The modest request of Hezekiah's servants to speak in the Syrian language, meeting with such contempt, may serve to teach us how confident of success the blasphemer was. And it only serves to heighten the triumph of Hezekiah the more. It is hardly possible to determine whether this second speech of Rab-shakeh exceeded most in lies or blasphemy. He might perhaps, with truth, laugh at the king of Judah's military preparation, or his dependance upon Egypt. An arm of flesh is a poor security, at the best of times. But his trust in the God of the armies of heaven, for this impious wretch to defy! what an awful instance of the most arrogant blasphemy was this! And to charge Hezekiah with destroying the altars of God, when in truth, the pious king had been only throwing down the altars of idolatry, in honor of the true God, was as base a falsehood. But Reader! what awful characters do such men afford, who come forward to oppose God, and his people. Here was a new Pharaoh started up, to the terror of God's people, for a season, but principally, and finally for the display of God's glory. Pause in like manner over all the temporary triumphs of the ungodly. Upon every occasion of this sort

whether as it refers to your own history, or to the circumstances of the church of Jesus, I love to read the 37th Psalm.

36 But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

37 Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh.

How delightful it is to do as the servants of Hezekiah did upon various trials; keep silence. *In your patience* (saith our dear Lord) *possess ye your souls*. The rent garment and the sprinkled ashes, were tokens of real sorrow. In the gospel it is the broken and the contrite heart, sprinkled with the blood of Christ.

#### REFLECTIONS.

THERE are many improving observations which arise out of this chapter. In the first place, I would call upon the Reader to remark with me, that though Hezekiah is said to have been the best of all the kings of Judah, yet Hezekiah was not without his afflictions. We see in the very midst of attempting the reformation of the people, and the abolishing of idols, the Lord permits an idolatrous prince not only to come against him, but for a time to succeed. Reader! it is so, it must be so, in the life of grace. Faith must be exercised, that it may be more precious than gold that perisheth. Jesus saith, as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Lord! I would say in answer, spare not thy rebukes, nor suffer thy child to be spoiled for want of the rod, when thy wisdom seeth it necessary. But oh! thou, most blessed Lord, give me the penetrating eye to discover, under all the frowns of thy providence, the sweet smiles of thy love. And let my faith be always alive, in full exercise, to be looking forward to that happy period, when thy child shall leave the school of learning, to rest in thy bosom in the full enjoyment of the knowledge and perfect love of thee, for ever.

I would learn, in the next place, from the trial of good king Hezekiah, that, as this world is not the believer's home, so his security from trial is never over, until he arrives safe at his Father's house. My soul, was it not a precious mercy in the Lord, to take off Hezekiah's mind from all confidence in creatures, when he was thus feelingly taught to put no confidence in princes? Poor Hezekiah thought to buy the friendship of the king of Assyria with a present, and therefore sent him the silver and the gold which he had for this purpose. It is very true the children of God consider, or ought to consider, gold, silver, and precious stones, as objects of no value; and would gladly part with them, if this would make carnal men, less angry. But the Lord will not allow any temporizing. How often would my soul have purchased peace with the wicked at almost any rate, if I might enjoy Jesus unmolested! But this is the

believers' motto: *If any will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution.* This should wave in the standard of the Christian in his holy war. Dearest, blessed Jesus! hast thou said; *in the world ye shall have tribulation?* And hath my foolish heart, in order to stand fair with the world, sought a shelter from it? Oh! my Lord, henceforth let the world frown, so thou but smile: let the Rab-shakehs of the present hour utter their reproaches, and pour forth all their contempt, so thou but grant me that unspeakable blessing: *In me ye shall have peace.* By faith in thee I shall overcome the world; and from confidence in thee I shall rejoice; and my joy no man take from me.

In the last place, Reader, let you and I learn from this interesting chapter, to hold our peace, and in our patience to possess our souls, when for a moment the ungodly seem to triumph. It is but a *seeming* triumph, and like the crackling of thorns under the pot. Yes! blessed Jesus! my soul would wait at thy footstool in silence, and in patient waiting would I be found. I know there is One at the mercy-seat, whom the Father heareth alway. There I rest my ground of acceptance only in Jesus. He will plead my cause, and bring me forth in the path of righteousness, for his name's sake. Oh! the relief my soul feels, even in the waiting. Heavenly Lord! thou hast fulfilled, thou wilt fulfil that promise: *He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.*

## CHAP. XIX.

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter relates the effect Rab-shakeh's blasphemy had upon the mind of Hezekiah, when it was reported to him. He sends to desire an interest in the prayers of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah's answer. Sennacherib sends a renewed message of insolence to Hezekiah. The king goes up into the house of the Lord, lays it before the Lord, and prayeth. The Lord, by his servant Isaiah, comforts him, and sends an angel to the destruction of the Assyrians. Sennacherib is slain by his sons.*

**A**ND it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

If the Reader will turn to the parallel history of this memorable event, as it is rehearsed in the 2d book of the Chronicles, chap. xxxii. 1—8, he will there find that Hezekiah has been consulting with an arm of flesh, and taking counsel with his princes, how to counteract the stratagem of the king of Assyria. But here we find the pious king got back to the right path of duty, and of safety. He is here beautifully represented as going to the Lord. Reader! mark it down. If we begin with the Lord, and his strength, and his Arm, which is Jesus, then the Lord will bless instruments to our deliverance, and safety. But if, like Hezekiah, we

first begin in the flesh, it is a mercy if the Lord strips us of all our hopes, in order to shew us where our strength lies. Sweetly, dearest Lord, dost thou teach our poor nature these precious things. Isaiah xxvii. 5.

2 And he sent Elisha, which ~~was~~ over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day *is* a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and *there is* not strength to bring forth.

4 It may be the LORD thy God will hear all the words of Rab-shaken, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that are left.

Nothing can be more interesting than this view of Hezekiah and his court. He sends his servants to seek an interest in the prayers of the prophet. But he goes himself to the Lord. Ministers, faithful ministers may be helpful with their prayers, and those of the church; but the poor soul hastens away himself also to Jesus. There is another great beauty in the subject of the prayer desired. *Lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.* Ten tribes of Jacob were already in captivity, and Judah was in imminent danger. Reader! such is the church of Jesus. A remnant according to grace. Oh! for fervent, earnest, Jacob-like wrestling with our God in prayer, for the remnant of the Lord's heritage now! Why, Lord, should thine heritage be put to confusion?

5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

Observe how gracious the Lord is. No sooner do his people call, but the Lord answers! And the Lord not only promises deliverance to his servant, but destruction to his enemy. Oh! for grace to see and believe

this sure event, as it concerns salvation by Jesus! His church shall not only be blessed with everlasting joy; but the accursed enemy shall be condemned in everlasting ruin. *So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.* Judges v. 24.

8 ¶ So Rab-shakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

9 And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee: he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying,

The Lord was pleased to cause a little pause in the proud attempts of Sennacherib and his general, by diverting his attention elsewhere, both for the more complete destruction of this idolatrous prince, and for the better exercise of his servant's faith. Very gracious are the Lord's dealings with his people upon these occasions, could we but exercise faith always in the view of them: but alas! we lose the enjoyment of a thousand mercies, for want of eying them in this point of view.

10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?

12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Thelaser?

13 Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Henah, and Ivah?

The same blasphemy is made use of by the master, as by the servant. It only riseth a little higher. He charges God with deceiving Hezekiah and bids him beware of it. Whereas Rab-shakeh only begged Hezekiah not to deceive himself. Reader! to what a desperate state of horrible impiety is the mind of men capable of being carried! Is it not enough to make one tremble, when we consider that all men are alike by nature? Oh! dearest Lord Jesus! what do I owe thee, thou dear Lord, and what is the everlasting love I ought to pay thee for thy distinguishing grace!

14 And Hezekiah received the letter of the

hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest *between* the cherubims, thou art the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

16 LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God.

17 Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands.

18 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

19 Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD God, *even* thou only.

See, Reader, see how sweet and precious the blessed effects of grace! And, Lord, so do thou cause me to do by all the letters, and threats, and messages, and temptations of the devil, and all his party. Give me grace and wisdom to copy Hezekiah; to spread the whole before thee. Never to send answers in my own way. Never to combat in my own strength. But oh! let me fly to thee, thou blessed Jesus; do thou undertake for me; thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God. Reader! let me beg of you to remark the sweetness, and strength of Hezekiah's prayer. He prays for deliverance because the Lord's honor was concerned in it; God's faithfulness and covenant promises. Like another Joshua; *What wilt thou do (saith he) for thy great name, O Lord God, if Israel turn their backs upon their enemies?* See Joshua vii. 8, 9. As if he had said, it matters not what becomes of us, if our death and our destruction were all the consequences of the triumph of the foe. But it is of the highest importance that the faithfulness of a Covenant God, and his honor be taken care of, in his promises to his people, that they be not destroyed by the enemy. Reader! think of this statement of the argument whenever the enemy oppresseth you, as it concerns God's faithfulness in Christ. Oh! what a volume of the most unanswerable arguments in prayer doth that one pleading in Jesus afford, when we come before the high throne in the name and righteousness of the Lord Jesus. The grace, the word, the faithfulness, the promise, the oath of the Fa-

ther; and the blood and righteousness, and covenant salvation of Jesus: What poor soul can go with these pleas to a mercy seat, and go in vain!

20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, 'Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, *That* which thou hast prayed to me, against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard.

21 *This is* the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, *and* laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

22 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed; and against whom hast thou exalted *thy* voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even* against the Holy *One* of Israel.

23 By thy messengers thou hast reproached the LORD, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar-trees thereof, *and* the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, *and into* the forest of his Carmel.

24 I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places.

25 Hast thou not heard long ago *how* I have done it, *and* of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste fenced cities *into* ruinous heaps.

26 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were *as* the grass of the field: and *as* the green herb, *as* the grass on the house-tops, and *as* corn blasted before it be grown up.

27 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

28 Because thy rage against me and thy tumult

is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

29 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year, sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.

30 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

31 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion; the zeal of the LORD *of hosts* shall do this.

32 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.

33 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

34 For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

What a multitude of most rich and precious things appear in these verses. Observe, Reader! how long an answer the Lord returns to a short prayer. God is not only more ready to hear than we to pray; but will infinitely out-go all our desires, and our expectations. The Lord, in this answer, graciously condescends to explain the causes why bad men are permitted to exercise a temporary triumph; and in a most beautiful representation, as the daughter of Zion, describes how his people shall sooner or later laugh all her enemies to scorn. Observe, moreover, that what this proud, insolent tyrant directed, in his threats, against Hezekiah, the Lord took to himself. Sweet thought! Jesus considers the attack of all his people in this point of view. Who toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye. Is not this enough at all times to support and bear up under the trials of his people. But what I would have the Reader particularly to notice in this answer of the Lord is, that he here decidedly shews, that the actions of men, however undesigned on their part, are all under his appointment, and direction. *The deceiver and the deceived are his.* Although they mean not so, neither did their heart intend it; yet are they carrying on all God's designs, and doing the very thing which they intend not to do, but which the Lord appoints for his ultimate glo-

ry, the joy of his people, and the ruin of his enemies. What illustrious instances do the scriptures afford in proof of this. When the sons of Jacob sold Joseph, how little did they intend Joseph's glory, and their own preservation from famine. When Haman envied Mordecai, and went forth to his destruction, how little did he see the gallows he was building thereby for himself? Nay, above all these, and every other instance that can ever be thought of; when the Jews nailed our adorable Jesus to the cross, how far distant from their thoughts was it, that this cross would be for the everlasting salvation of the sinner. Reader! pause over these things, and look up at all times with the most awakened attention to that Sovereign Hand who ruleth among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth! And how very gracious was the answer of the Lord to the prayer of Hezekiah, as it concerned the deliverance of Jerusalem! How unpromising, indeed, were the things the Lord had assured Hezekiah! The siege had made a famine: The Lord promiseth plenty. How shall it be produced? Not by planting and by sowing; but the earth shall bring forth of itself. But this is not all. Out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant! By what means? Jerusalem is now closely blockaded! The king of Assyria will raze the walls of Jerusalem, he declares. No, saith Jehovah, so far from razing the walls, he shall not shoot a single arrow! Here was room for the exercise of faith. And no doubt Hezekiah found it so. But observe, Reader, the cause of all these promised mercies. Not for Hezekiah's righteousness; nor for the peoples' worth and obedience: But for the Lord's own sake in the covenant promises; and for his servant David's sake, to whom he had promised his sure mercies. But oh! how infinitely heightened, and increasingly precious doth this history appear, read through the medium of gospel mercies, and secured to believers in the covenant faithfulness of God the Father, and the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church of Christ, like Jerusalem, is closely besieged day by day. The enemy saith I will pursue: I will overtake. I will divide the spoil. My lust shall be gratified upon her. Hitherto, saith the Lord, shalt thou come, and no further. No weapon formed against the church of Jesus shall prosper. The church is the gift of the Father, the purchase of Christ, and the object of the Spirit's favor for ever. God will defend it, and it shall be a praise in the earth, the perfection of beauty in Jesus throughout all ages!

35 ¶ And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead corpses.

36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

37 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword:

and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

We have here not only the fulfilment of God's promises in the salvation of his people; but the pouring out of his anger in the destruction of his enemies. Sennacherib himself, though saved, was only saved to have a more painful destruction. His own children shall be his executioners; and he shall die unpitied, even by those who from the ties of nature ought to have loved him. Some have thought that the 76th Psalm was composed upon this occasion. If so, it is strongly expressed in token of the divine love to his people. And what a blessed issue to the troubles of Hezekiah and his people. But, Reader! think what a glorious display will that be, and what a final issue to all the afflictions of the church of Jesus; when he shall come with all his holy angels to be glorified in his saints, and to punish with swift destruction the enemies of his church from his presence for ever. All nations shall wail because of him, while his people shall shout with holy joy, crying out, Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Rev. i. 7.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! in the opening of this chapter we take part with Hezekiah in his affliction, and feel the commiseration of the believer in the view of his sorrows, and desolate circumstances. Behold him in the close of it, and how doth the faithful soul rejoice in the Lord's deliverance of him out of all. And is it not, dearest Jesus, in all the circumstances of thy people. Without thee, and beheld, only as they are in themselves, what poor, defenceless, oppressed, persecuted creatures are they, bent down under the hand of every foe. But when Jesus appears in their cause, oh! how precious is it to behold their strength in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

What an awful character is this impious monster, this Assyrian monarch! And yet what is he more than all the haters of God, and his people. Satan reigns in their hearts; they are scoffers, despisers, blasphemers, sworn foes to God and his Christ. And their name is legion, for they are many.

Blessed Jesus! how sweet is it to be taught of thee! How precious thy salvation! How great thy mercy in gathering sinners from the service of Satan to thy kingdom. Lord! grant that, like Hezekiah, trouble may lead my heart to thee; in all my afflictions to cast my burden upon the Lord, who hath promised to sustain me. I would spread all before thee, O Lord, and wait in faith thy deliverance, for thou art my strength, and my song, and art become my salvation.

## CHAP. XX.

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter prosecutes the history of Hezekiah. He is visited by sickness; he seeks to God in his affliction: receives a gracious answer in the lengthening of his life. His prayer: the Lord's answer. His death; and successor in the kingdom.*

**I**N those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.

It appears by the calculation of Hezekiah's life, that this sickness followed soon after his deliverance from Sennacherib. So quick is the transition from joy to sorrow in this world. The chambers of both are very near each other. Observe how gracious the Lord is in sending him notice of his approaching end. It was an earnest prayer of David that he might be taught to number his days, and to know their length. Psm. xxxix. 4.

2 Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying,

3 I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is* good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

Hezekiah had learnt by experience the efficacy of prayer, and he therefore hath recourse to it again. But what I wish the Reader to notice with me in this prayer of the king of Judah is, that he turned towards the wall. He could not go up to the temple, to the mercy-seat, but like another Jonah he looked towards it. Jesus was all along typified by the mercy-seat in the Old Testament scripture, and by the temple. And the church, in reference to views of Jesus saith, he looketh from behind the wall, shewing himself through the lattice. Song ii. 9. Jonah ii. 4. What a delightful thought it is, that the same precious faith in Christ marked all the Old Testament saints. Some have thought that Hezekiah dreaded death. But certainly there is nothing in the prayer which implies as much. Neither doth the king pray for life or death. The subject of his petition is for God's remembrance of him. And the argument he makes use of is, not taking pride in his integrity, but humbly begging to be remembered for his faith in God's covenant grace and mercy, and what is that but redemption in Christ?

4 And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying,

5 Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD.

6 And I will add unto thy days fifteen years:

and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

How delightful are those gracious answers of a most gracious God! not that there was any change in the divine mind, but that the Lord, having in his providence induced a state which, under grace, shall lead his people to pray, he prepares their minds by this for his fore-determined answers of mercy. And observe how the Lord exceeds in gift what Hezekiah asked in prayer. He desired but to be *remembered*. And the Lord not only spares him from the effect of this sickness, but adds fifteen years to his life. Hence I have often thought that the apostle Paul intended to encourage wrestling petitioners at a throne of grace to ask for somewhat more than the promise seems to hold forth, as if a believer could never get to the bottom of the promise, when he said, *Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.* Philip. iii. 20.

7 And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid *it* on the boil, and he recovered.

8 And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What *shall be* the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day?

9 And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: Shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?

10 And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.

11 And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

We can hardly say on this occasion which to admire most, the want of faith in Hezekiah, in asking a sign, or the abundant grace of the Lord in granting one by way of confirming his sacred word. Surely, Hezekiah, it was enough that the Lord promised. But, alas! are we not all incredulous and unbelieving upon a thousand less occasions? I stay not to attempt explaining how this sign was accomplished. Subjects of mere curiosity, or amusement, come not within the design of this humble Commentary. I venture, however, to tell the Reader that the 15 Songs of degrees, as they are stiled, which we meet with in the book of the Psalms from the 120th to 134th, have been conjectured by some to have

reference to the degrees in the sun's shade on this occasion, and the lengthening the king's life. But I only mention it; I presume not to add a single thought upon the subject.

12 At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick.

13 And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and *all* the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

It is conjectured by some that as the Babylonians worshipped the sun, the respect paid Hezekiah in the going back of the sun fifteen degrees, as before related, (for either they had heard of it or seen it) made the king of Babylon conceive very highly of Hezekiah. But be the motive whatsoever it might, how poor a figure did Hezekiah in truth make, however he might seem in the eyes of idolaters in this foolish ostentation of his treasures. Had he told them of his wonderful and miraculous cure; had he preached to them of the God of his fathers;—had he shewed them the word of God, and the miracles shewn his people, this would have been suitable indeed, and highly becoming. But Reader! pause and enquire are there not many vain characters like Hezekiah, even among the people of Jesus! What parlour shall we go in among those who profess godliness where Jesus and his salvation is made the topic of discourse! How is it, Reader, that there should be such a culpable shyness even among gracious souls in speaking of the best things one with another, or in awakened souls in telling to the unawakened, like these Babylonians, of the wonders of salvation by Jesus!

14 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, *even* from Babylon.

15 And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, *All the things* that *are* in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

16 And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD.

17 Behold, the days come, that all that *is* in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

18 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

19 Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good *is* the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, *Is it not good*, if peace and truth be in my days.

Reader! observe how men's punishments rise out of their very sins. *Thy backslidings shall correct thee.* How little did Hezekiah think that such events should follow. Oh! with what caution ought we to walk through this mutable state of things around us! If the Reader wishes to see the accomplishment of this prophecy of Isaiah, let him turn to the history of the Babylonish captivity about 100 years after. Dan. i. 2, 3, &c.

20 ¶ And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, *are they not* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

21 And Hezekiah slept with his fathers; and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

Here we arrive to the conclusion of Hezekiah's history and his life together. This indeed makes the sum total in the arithmetic of every man's life. In the 2d book of the Chronicles, indeed, we have a much more circumstantial account of Hezekiah. I refer the Reader therefore to the whole of what is there contained in the 29th and three following chapters.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! what a series of delightful instructions open to our view, in looking at Hezekiah on his supposed death-bed. The greatest favorites of heaven are exposed, in common with others, to the humiliation of the grave. But oh! how different their state! and who is it hath made it so. Even thee, thou blessed, blessed Jesus. It is thou which hast converted the chambers of the grave into chambers of peace and safety. By thy death thou hast overcome death. And by thy finished salvation thou hast delivered them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage. Hail! O thou glorious, great I AM, who art the resurrection and the life.

Reader! let you and I listen to the sweet, swan-like note of the dying Hezekiah. He laments that he shall see the Lord no more in the land of the living; that he shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. But Reader! you and I know that, when believers exchange by death the outward courts of God's house for the inner temple of his glory, we shall see Jesus as he is; we shall awake up after his likeness, and be with him for ever. We leave, indeed, the inhabitants of the world when we drop off this earthly tabernacle. But is this matter of regret, to exchange this world for the upper; earth for heaven; sinners for saints; and evil men for angels and the spirits of just men made perfect? Chiefly, thou precious Lord Jesus, independent of every other, and indeed to the exclusion of every other, thy presence alone is better than life itself. Thy person, thy salvation, thy glory, and the heaven of heavens, thou givest to the souls of thy people; what a happy exchange do they make that die in thee, O Lord Jesus? Oh! for faith in lively exercise, when thou shall give the signal for my departure; when that solemn, glorious hour shall come, and I hear thy precious voice; *The master is come and calleth for thee.* Oh! for faith to mount up with holy, joly and rapture inconceivable, and like the patriarch of old, may the last and most precious word that shall hang upon my dying lips be Jesus, as I utter the same words as he did; *Into thine hands I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth.*

## CHAP. XXI.

### CONTENTS.

*The reign of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, is contained in this chapter; and an awful reign of sin it is. He is succeeded by Amon his son, such another awful character as the father. His death is also recorded, and Josiah his son succeeds him in the kingdom.*

**M**ANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hephzi-bah.

2 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

3 For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed: and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

4 And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name.

5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

6 And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke *him* to anger.

7 And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:

8 Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.

9 But they hearkennd not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.

10 And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying,

11 Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations *and* hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which *were* before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols:

12 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I *am* bringing *such* evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.

13 And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as *a man* wipeth a dish, wiping *it*, and turning *it* upside down.

14 And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their

enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies ;

15 Because they have done *that which was* evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.

16 Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another ; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD.

17 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah ?

18 And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza : and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

I bring the whole of a life so flagitious as that of Manasseh within one point of view, both for the sake of shortness, and for gathering all the instruction it affords before the Reader at once. But as the Holy Ghost hath been graciously pleased to give the church further particulars concerning Manasseh than what is here said of him in the 2nd book of the Chronicles, chapter xxxiii. I very earnestly beg the Reader to read the whole of what is there said of Manasseh at the time he peruseth this chapter. And the more so, indeed, because here we only learn his worthlessness. There we discover the penitence he manifested in affliction. And by comparing both parts of his history together, we learn, under the teaching of the blessed Spirit, as illustrious an example of the triumphs of grace in his recovery, as we behold the most woeful instance of the fall of man in his vileness. So that blended in one and the same point of view, we behold the truth of what the apostle was commissioned to tell the church, that *where sin abounded grace doth much more abound : that as sin reigneth unto death so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* Rom. v. 20, 21. I cannot refrain stopping the Reader in the perusal of this passage to remark the graciousness of God in his determined punishment of Jerusalem. The Lord saith that *he will wipe it as a man wipeth a dish, turning it upside down.* Do, Reader, observe those expressions. Jerusalem shall be wiped, not broken, not cast away, not destroyed ; but wiped. It shall be much tossed about, indeed, from the highest to the lowest, fairly upside down ; but nevertheless all this is with a view to cleansing. It is all in mercy, all in love, all in tenderness. The Lord saith in the after age ; *I am returned to Jerusalem*

*with mercies.* Zech. i. 16. And he hath opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a fountain for sin and for uncleanness. Zech. xiii. 1. And where is this but in thy blood, precious Jesus! thou art the Lamb of God that takest away sin. And thou art the mercy promised. Luke i. 72.

19 ¶ Amon *was* twenty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah.

20 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh did.

21 And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them:

22 And he forsook the LORD God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the LORD.

23 ¶ And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and slew the king in his own house.

24 And 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.

25 Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

26 And he was buried in his sepulchre in the garden of Uzza: and Josiah his son reigned in his stead.

We have here the short but distressing account of Amon's reign. And in the parallel passage in the 2d book of the Chronicles, there is nothing to soften it, as in the instance of his father; but on the contrary, we are told that he did not humble himself before the Lord as his father had done. Alas! sin only tends to harden more and more, unless almighty grace subdue. As Amon was succeeded by his son Josiah, concerning whom the Holy Ghost hath given a gracious record: the next chapter will be a relief from the sad circumstances related in this. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 23.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! mark, I beseech you, in the character of Manasseh, the evident truth of God's holy word, that the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son. Grace descends not from father to son by natural generation. But what a gracious God had Manasseh to do with! Oh! how lovely and encouraging is it to poor sinners, to behold such monuments of mercy placed in the church, as if to tell men that there is mercy.

ey with God that he might be feared. Yes! precious Jesus! thou art the Father of mercies; and thou art the mercy promised; thou art indeed, and ever wilt be, Jesus. In that lovely name all mercy is contained. Thou art the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof.

But Reader! while we look at Amon the son of Manasseh, in the very moment our souls feel all possible encouragement in the grace vouchsafed the father, is there not enough to induce trembling when we behold the hardened state of the son. Like the two thieves on the cross. Who can contemplate that sight without a mixture of joy and terror: Both so near Jesus, and yet the one as unconscious as the dead; while the other manifests forth so illustrious an evidence of the highest faith and truest repentance. Oh! thou blessed author and finisher of our faith and salvation, grant, if it be thy blessed will, both to Writer and Reader, suited grace to profit by such striking examples. Let every thing tend to lead our hearts to thee, for of thee cometh our salvation: Lord open our eyes, unstop our ears, that we may no longer be uncircumcised in heart and spirit; but make us altogether what thou wouldst have us to be, and *work in us both to will and to do of thy good pleasure.*

## CHAP. XXII.

### CONTENTS.

*We are brought acquainted in this chapter with Josiah, the good king. Many of his pious deeds are recounted. The book of the law is found by Hilkiah. Shaphan reads in it before the king. Josiah's pious weeping in the rehearsal. He sendeth with humbleness to inquire of the Lord. The Lord's answer.*

**J**OSIAH was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath.

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

The most interesting circumstances for a gospel Reader to mark in those verses are the wonderful properties of grace. Josiah could derive nothing from his wicked father, either in precept or example, but what was evil. And yet we find in his early days tokens of grace. Oh! Reader! how sure and certain is it, that grace springs wholly from the sovereign pleasure and appointment of Jehovah. It ariseth from the fountain head of everlasting love. } *Even so, Father* (as our dearest Jesus explained it) *for so it seemed good in thy sight.* This is the sole cause. And therefore here must be ascribed the sole glory. Matt. xi. 26.

3 ¶ And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, *that* the king sent Shaphan the son

of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying,

4 Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people.

5 And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD: and let them give it to the doers of the work which is in the house of the LORD, to repair the breaches of the house,

6 Unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house.

7 Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully.

If the Reader will read the parallel history of this pious king, as it is more largely recorded in the book of the Chronicles, 2 Chron. xxxiv. he will there find that in the eighth year of his reign, which was the sixteenth of his life, he began to seek after the God of David his Father. Oh! how lovely is early piety. There is another beautiful account to be noticed in those verses; I mean the faithfulness of the workman. No reckoning, it is said, was made with them, because they dealt faithfully. When labourers act in their worldly concerns as under the eye of the Lord, how very lovely and graceful is the sight. How exceedingly to be wished it is that gospel-times furnished out continual instances of this kind. And when piety is blended with honesty, and men are gracious as well as conscientious, oh! how blessed is the sight! We have a beautiful example of this in the workmen of Boaz. The Lord be with you, said Boaz to his reapers. The Lord bless thee, was the answer they returned. Ruth ii. 4.

8 ¶ And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

This is a most interesting verse. It should seem very plain that during the long period that idolatry had prevailed in the land, not only the temple had been suffered to fall into ruins; but the very word of God had been so disregarded, that not a copy of it was among the people. It was God's command by Moses, that every king should himself write out a copy of it: Deut. xvii. 18. And there was a further command, beside that which concerned the person of the king in studying the law of God himself; it was to be publicly read every seventh year: Deut. xxxi. 10—13.

Reader! to what a deplorable state was the children of Israel reduced at this time, when so far from reading in the word of God, the very sacred book itself they had lost. Oh! ye that disregard your bibles, that pass by the reverence ye owe to the holy word of God. Behold here the dreadful effects of it. My soul! doth God's sacred word contain the words of eternal life, even Jesus and his great salvation? And is this precious treasure disregarded, slighted, overlooked by me? Do I suffer that holy word which is able to make me wise unto salvation; do I suffer it from sabbath to sabbath to lie by on the shelf, until my sentence of everlasting condemnation might be written upon the dust of it which lies upon the cover! Reader! I pray God that this may never be your case nor mine. But what a mercy was it in God, to cause this copy which Hilkiah found to be secured during the whole reign of idolatry. Whose blessed hand was it that was thus commissioned of the Lord to put it in so secure a place in the temple? Let his memory be ever blessed. Some have thought that it was Moses, because we read that he commanded Joshua after he had finally read to the people the book of the law, to put it in the side of the ark as a witness for after ages. Deut. xxxi. 24—27. But Reader! let it have been whom it may, have you thought of the mercy you and I have derived from it? Certain it is, that had this copy not been found, the hand that now writes, and the eye that reads those observations upon it, would never have known the one nor the other. Oh! blessed God! how evident from hence, even if there were no other testimonies, how evident from hence is it, that thou hast given us those scriptures of truth, from thy graciously watching over it! Oh! Lord, how gracious art thou, that so long a period of idolatry did not wear out thy long-suffering and patience! Oh! Lord, grant that I may esteem thy precious word more than my necessary food, and that it may be my study all the day. And let mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I may be occupied in thy word. I cannot help detaining the Reader with one observation more on this interesting verse, just to remark the distinguishing mercy of the Lord towards Hilkiah, that he should be the highly favored one to discover this hidden treasure. Reader! is not that minister of Jesus peculiarly blessed, whom the Lord honors with his secrets, and whom our Jesus commissions to bring out of his treasury things new and old for his household's use? Think, Reader! what joy the discovery of this blessed book must have given to Hilkiah, when he cried out in holy transport, 'I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord.' And let that soul describe his joy, for no language of another can express it, when from the word of God he can say, I have found Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth! John i. 45. Reader! where was this book found? Was it not in the temple? Where shall you and I find Jesus, but in his ordinances, his word, his house of prayer!

9 And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD.

10 And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

What an interesting account this is! What a wonderful effect must have been wrought upon the minds of all the people, in the discovery of this inestimable treasure? How lovely a representation is given of Josiah? Surely all the people must have followed his example. Oh! Lord! what cause is there now that our hearts should be rent, in the dreadful views of sin which the world affords, and the awful threatenings thy word holds forth as the sure consequence of it.

12 And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying,

13 Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written, concerning us.

How gracious an enquiry. Josiah compared the threatenings of God's law with the magnitude of the sins of the people, and he felt the dreaded punishment as already at the door. These are sure signs of a work of grace, when the inquiry goes forth in earnestness, What must I do to be saved! And when that enquiry is accompanied with what the Lord himself calls, *accepting the punishment of our iniquity*. Levit. xxvi. 41. Reader! are you desirous to know whether a real work of grace is begun in your heart? Answer the question by these marks: Do you feel sin as exceeding sinful? And do you from your heart confess that while you seek mercy, you know yourself to be totally undeserving of it! These are precious tokens, because they lead to all precious Jesus. For surely, Lord, thou wilt be precious when I am brought to see that I am for ever lost and undone without thee!

14 So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shullam the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.

15 ¶ And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me,

16 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, *even* all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read.

17 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 kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

According to the dates of the prophets, *Jeremiah* had been preaching his sermons for five years before this event took place; and *Zephaniah* ministered much about the same time; yet *Huldah*, like another *Deborah*, was chosen of the Lord to be his servant on this business. And what a solemn strain is her answer delivered in. Nothing complimentary; nothing to soften the truth, though it be delivered to the pious Josiah. *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you.* Oh! for faithfulness in the ministers of the Lord Jesus. Most awful must it be in such, to accommodate themselves to the time-serving age of corruption, and prophecy smooth things to sinners, whatever their worldly rank may be.

18 But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, *As touching* the words which thou hast heard;

19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.

20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

How delightful are personal mercies, when the Lord separates between the precious and the vile; when the word of the gospel comes with a

distinguishing direction like a letter, to *you* is the word of this salvation sent. Josiah must have felt peculiar pleasure in this, to allay the grief of his mind, in the prospect of the general evil coming upon his people. Reader! do not forget this one thing. As religion is a personal thing, until we have a conscious sense of a personal interest in it, and a personal enjoyment of it, the clearest views of divine things will bring no comfort. Balaam could, and did say concerning Christ, *I shall see him*; but then he add, that dreadful close to it, *but not nigh*. Oh! look to it that the word be *an ingrafted word*, for this alone will prove the salvation of the soul in Jesus. James i. 21.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! are you young in years! behold the loveliness of early piety. What can afford a more interesting sight than to see our youths in the first days of their strength, asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, to join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant which cannot be broken, and like Josiah, of whom it is said, *that while he was yet young he began to seek after the God of his Father*.

Reader! are you aged, or advancing towards the middle of life, and yet unacquainted with salvation, living without a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus! Oh! that God the Spirit, from your reading this delightful account of Josiah, may awaken your heart, and open your eyes to the love and glory of the Person and righteousness of Jesus, that now to day, while it is called to day, you may seek the Lord God of your fathers, before the night cometh when no man can work.

Precious Jesus! let the same impressions of grace which wrought upon the mind of Josiah, be in me. Lord, make my heart tender; give me to humble myself before thee: let my soul be bowed down in the dust in the contemplation of my own vileness, and the iniquity of the land, that when thou comest forth in judgment, thou mayest, blessed Jesus, be my strength, and the security of thy people in the day of visitation. And oh! Lord, grant that in thy blood and righteousness my soul may find an everlasting hiding place, both from the afflictions of this life and the terrors of the world to come. Yes! precious Jesus! on thee do I call, to thee will I come, by thee shall I be saved, for thou art my strength, and my song, and art become my salvation.

## CHAP. XXIII.

### CONTENTS.

*Josiah conveneth all Judah to the hearing of the book of the Law of God, which Hilkiah had found in the temple. This chapter relates the circumstances of this solemnity. The king reneweth the covenant of the Lord, and prosecuteth the destruction of idolatry.*

AND the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.

2 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inha-

bitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.

There is a wonderful degree of beauty in this chapter, as well as a great degree of humble reverence manifested by Josiah upon the occasion, in thus convening all Judah to hear God's sacred word. Josiah had been told that God's decree for the punishment of Israel was gone forth, and could not be altered. Yet Josiah still prosecutes the service of learning himself, and causing Israel to hear and observe the law of God. Not content with causing the blessed book to be read, it should seem he read it to the people himself. Perhaps, in obedience to that precept, Deut. xvii. 18, 19.

3 ¶ And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all *their* heart and all *their* soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

The covenant here spoken of means the renewal of that gracious one the Lord had vouchsafed in times past, when he formed Israel into a church; in which God graciously said, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Implying the people's hearty and joyful consent to have God for their God in a covenant way, as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Exod. xix. 5, 6.

4 ¶ And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el.

5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

6 And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped *it* small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people.

7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that *were* by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.

8 And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beer-sheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that *were* in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which *were* on a man's left hand at the gate of the city.

9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren.

10 And he defiled Topheth, which *is* in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

11 And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which *was* in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

12 And the altars that *were* on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake *them* down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

13 And the high places that *were* before Jeru-

saalem, which *were* on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.

14 And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

15 Moreover the altar that *was* at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.

When the king had finished reading the words of God's holy law, he proceeded with an holy zeal to bear testimony to God's truth, in the destruction of all that God's holy law had forbidden. And what a blessed work was here wrought. Reader! are you not astonished to behold, and read the account! How was it possible for the great enemy of souls to have kept up his cursed empire in the heart, and even in the midst of God's own people, from generation to generation, in this manner! Reader! do you wonder at it? Look within! See what a body of sin and death, even in the midst of grace, (if in mercy the Lord the Spirit hath regenerated you) you carry about with you! If we recollect, moreover, that Josiah had sat upon the throne, at the time that this great work was done, about eighteen years, during which time he had set his people a good example, it is not a little wonderful that, under the blessings of such a reign, idolatry should have held out to such an extent. Reader! what will example do? nay, what will even reading the sacred word of God do, unless that reading of God's own word be accompanied with his own power? It is hardly possible to read this account of what Josiah destroyed, but with fear and trembling. There were vessels of Baal even in the temple of the Lord: there were idolatrous priests who, at the command of the former kings, had dared to burn incense in the high places: there were even houses for the transaction of such abominable filthiness and unnatural uncleanness, as are not to be once named among us, as becometh saints. And all these not merely in the suburbs of Judea; not near the cloisters of God's church; but in the very church itself. There were horses given to the sun, that were, as it should seem, kept for the worshipping of the sun by them. Perhaps, as some have thought, at sun-rising the idolaters went forth on them, to make exercises in honor of this creature of God, the sun. And strange to think, the stables of these beasts were in the very temple itself. And the image of Moloch, in the valley of Tophet, was among the horrible services of the people, where they committed these unnatural and unfeeling crimes, to

make their own children, in honor of this dunghill-god, pass through fire. Reader! pause as you read, and let our souls be humbled to the dust in the view of such a state of degradation to which, by sin, the human mind is capable of being brought. Let us never lose sight of one unquestionable truth, as we read the awful account, namely, that by the fall of man, all men are by nature the same. What one man, or one nation is capable of doing, all are equally prone to. It is grace, free, sovereign, distinguishing grace which maketh all the difference. And therefore think, Reader, (and oh! my soul, do thou never, never for a moment lose sight of it) what unspeakable, what endless mercies do we owe to Jesus, who, in the fulness of grace and truth, came to repair the desolations of many generations, and to raise up the ruins of David which were fallen down. Oh! thou precious, blessed, adorable Redeemer! Hail! thou glorious, gracious Benefactor of mankind! Amos ix. 11.

16 And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that *were* there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned *them* upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

17 Then he said, What title *is* that that I see? And the men of the city told him, *It is* the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Beth-el.

18 And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria.

There is somewhat particularly interesting in the history to which these verses refer, and I would beg the Reader to mark it with me. If he will turn to the thirteenth chapter of the first book of the kings, he will read the history of those events, which the Lord, by the prophet there spoken of, predicted that Josiah himself should fulfil. And although it was at a distance of no less than 350 years from the time of the prediction to the accomplishment, yet so exact, and so particular was the correspondence of one to the other, as if it had been recorded in one and the same day. Reader! doth it not warm your heart, the very thought of it? Oh! how delightful is this doctrine, considered as to the great object of all doctrine, the salvation by our Lord Jesus. He was set up from everlasting. And Paul tells us that the church also was chosen in him before the foundation of the world. See those precious scriptures to this effect: Prov. viii. 22—31. Micah v. 2. Ephes. i. 4. 2 Tim. i. 9. In addition to the observations made in the Commentary, on this history of the prophet, 1 Kings xiii, I would only here add, that though the Lord was pleased, by way of example to the church, to punish that

prophet's disobedience with temporary death; yet you observe here the Lord watched over his dust; and amidst the burning of the bones of others, his lay secure. It is a part of the covenant to inflict the rod, by way of chastisement, for sin, but the everlasting salvation of the Lord's heritage is secured, from the Lord's righteousness. Psm. lxxxix. 30—36. What the old lying prophet proposed to himself, in being laid in the same sepulchre, I know not, but like another lying prophet, he thought, perhaps, the very dust of God's Israel a gracious preservative. Numb. xxiii. 10. Reader! think of this! And be assured no goldsmith ever prized the precious dust of the golden ore, equal to what Jesus doth the very ashes of his people. However, to your view, or my view, this may seem lost, and scattered, and mingled amidst the rubbish of the earth, or among the bodies of the carnal, Jesus beholds every particle of his whole mystical body; and when he cometh to make up his jewels, will as easily gather them altogether, and reanimate, and cause them to rise up a glorified body, as he first called them out of the dust of the earth, when he breathed in their nostrils the breath of life. Sweet thought. Oh! my soul, cherish it. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.* Psm. cxvi. 15.

19 And all the houses also of the high places that *were* in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke *the LORD* to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Beth-el.

20 And he slew all the priests of the high places that *were* there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as *it is* written in the book of this covenant.

22 Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah;

23 But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, *wherein* this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.

What a delightful view of Josiah is here given? He first sets his heart to cleanse the temple; and next offers himself and his people to the Lord. And as this passover was typical of Christ, no doubt Josiah and his people had an eye to Jesus in it. And what a delightful testimony the Holy Ghost hath given of it. Surely there never was holden such a passover through all the periods of the history of Canaan. How is Josiah's memory blessed in this view!

24 Moreover the *workers with* familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

25 And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there *any* like him.

When we consider the youth of this good king, it serves to teach young persons of all ranks, how graceful in the Lord's sight is early piety.

26 Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.

27 And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

Reader! we learn from hence these most solemn truths. The word of the Lord is unalterable. He hath proclaimed the sure wages of sin to be death. And rather than this law shall be altered, his only begotten Son shall die. Oh! how solemn a consideration in the very moment while we bless God for the mercy. We rejoice indeed; but we rejoice with trembling.

28 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

29 In his days Pharaoh-nechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him.

30 And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusa-

lem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead.

No character among the sons of men is free from imperfection. The best pictures have their shade. Of none but he who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and fairer than the children of men, could it ever be said that in his mouth was found no guile. None but thee, thou blessed Jesus, was altogether holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and higher than the heavens! Josiah, we see in this instance, lost his confidence in the Lord. What though Pharaoh went up against the king of Assyria, what was that to Josiah? Was he afraid that in so doing, he might come too nigh to Judah? And if so, why did he not consult the Lord? Beside, as we read in the parallel history, (2 Chron. xxxv. 20, 21) the king of Egypt told him that he was acting under the authority of God, Yet Josiah slighted all these things, and the consequence was fatal. Alas! what is man in his highest attainments! Oh! dearest Lord Jesus, how glorious to the view is it, in my soul's esteem, that thy righteousness is complete, by which the poor sinner is justified.

31 Jehoahaz *was* twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

32 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

33 And Pharaoh-nechoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.

34 And Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and he turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there.

35 And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give *it* unto Pharaoh-nechoh.

36 Jehoiakim *was* twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.

37 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lorp, according to all that his fathers had done.

We are hastening now to the period of Judah's history, as a kingdom. Three short months Jehoahaz reigned; and then was made a prisoner. The prophet Ezekiel laments him under the similitude of a young lion. Ezek. xix. 1—3. And Jeremiah, who taught the people to mourn over Josiah, (2 Chron. xxxv. 25) lamented the obstinacy and disobedience of his son. Jer. xxii. 10—12. Another of Josiah's children was made king, when Jehoahaz was carried away captive. But neither the captivity of his brother, nor the poverty of himself, under the tyranny of the king of Egypt, induced any reform. We read of nothing but evil; and Judah ripening for God's judgments. Alas! when God's milder chastisements will not reclaim; is it wonderful, nay, is it not gracious, that severer ones are adopted!

#### REFLECTIONS.

How interesting to good Josiah appeared the law of God! With what peculiar delight did he convene all the people to attend the reading of it! And with what holy joy did he celebrate the passover, and renew the covenant God had made with their fathers. Think, Reader! I charge you what should be your joy and mine in receiving the gospel, the precious, blessed gospel of the ever blessed God! How should we delight to attend the public assemblies, and gather others to attend also! And if the mere celebration of the paschal feast in commemoration was so interesting, which after all was but a type of better things, founded upon better promises, how should our joy burst forth at the feast of Christ our Passover, and with what holy rapture should we attend Jesus at his supper! Oh! thou Lamb of God! oh! thou who art both the Passover, the sacrifice, the High Priest, and the golden Altar on which the sacrifice was offered! Be thou my joy, my sacrifice, my righteousness, the whole of the covenant, and my all in all. Let it be said indeed, that surely there never was holden such a passover, as when Christ was sacrificed for his people. And never was my soul really, and truly feasted, until by happy faith, I ate of his flesh, and drank of his blood, by which I have eternal life abiding in me.

Let us not take our farewell of Josiah without gathering one improvement more from the view the Holy Ghost is pleased to give of him. Though it be not always becoming to cull out the shades of good men, yet if the soul be led to improve such views as shew the universal imperfection of nature, in order to lead to Jesus, then we may not only with safety do it, but also derive much advantage from it. Yes, blessed Lord Jesus! wherever I look, to whomsoever I direct my attention, I find frailty and imperfection mark them all. But in thee I behold all perfection, all glory. Oh, then! on thee let my soul unceasingly look.

Let me behold thee as God my Father beholds thee; and as far as a poor finite creature can imitate infinite delight, let my ravished soul say in humble breathings, this is my beloved Jesus in whom I am well pleased for salvation. I count all things else but dung and dross that I may know thee. Be thou my joy and my portion for ever.

## CHAP. XXIV,

### CONTENTS.

*The ruin of Judah is nearly arrived. Jehoiakim rebelling against the king of Babylon, to whom he had been tributary three years, is ruined. Jerusalem is taken. Some account of the evil reign of Zedekiah.*

**I**N his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him.

If the Reader will be careful to connect the last of the history of the kings of Judah, with the first of the Babylonish captivity, he should begin the close of the one with the opening of the other at this chapter. For here we first meet with that character of whom Daniel speaks so much, Nebuchadnezzar. Alas! such a character would never have been noticed in the Church but for the Church's backsliding. Satan would have never made the figure he doth had not our nature sinned.

2 And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets.

3 Surely at the commandment of the LORD came *this* upon Judah, to remove *them* out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did;

4 And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon.

5 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

6 So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

7 And the king of Egypt came not again any

more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt.

I pray the Reader to observe the hand of God in all this. Evil men are but instruments for the accomplishment of the divine will. Judah must be removed, as Israel had been before. It is, for the most part, by sorrow and chastisement the stout hearts of obstinate sinners are brought low.

8 Jehoiachim *was* eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name *was* Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.

9 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.

10 ¶ At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.

11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it.

12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.

13 And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.

14 And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, *even* ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorer sort of the people of the land.

15 And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, *those*

carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

16 And all the men of might, *even* seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all *that were* strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.

This may be really considered the close of the kingdom of Israel and Judah. For though there was a nominal king after Jehoiachim, yet as the king of Babylon made him king, he might be considered more as the creature of the king of Babylon, than possessing any kingly power. Here therefore we have the conquest of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people. Besides the multitude which the conquerer carried away to Babylon, we find from other parts of scripture an account of several remarkable characters. Ezekiel was among the captives. Ezek. i. 1, 2. Mordecai was also in the number. See Esther ii. 6.

17 ¶ And the king of Babylon made Mata-niah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

18 Zedekiah *was* twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

19 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

20 For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Reader! is it not awful, when we see that neither kindness nor severity will operate upon some minds. Zedekiah had seen the ruin of his kingdom by reason of sin; and yet he sinned more. Oh! how certain is it, that nothing but grace can change the heart. Dearest Lord, (I would say for myself and Reader), take not, oh! take not thine Holy Spirit from us!

#### REFLECTIONS.

WHAT an awful representation is made in this chapter, and, indeed, in the whole history; (for all the world is but one and the same volume) of sinners! Could one suppose it possible, was it not ascertained by fact, that men should brave the divine power, and, as it were, defy the Lord by the most determined perseverance in sin. See, my soul, in the destruction of Jerusalem, the sure and inevitable consequence! The wages of sin is, and must be, death. Oh! Lord Jesus, cause me, in the view

of it, to flee to thee for refuge, and let me hear thy voice saying, Oh! Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help found.

Reader, behold Jerusalem thus ruined! see the people carried away captives. See how the Lord permitted the very heathens of the earth to scourge his people! Who, after this, will take confidence while in sin. O Lord! be gracious to thy land. For Jesus' sake be not wroth very sore, neither do thou remember our iniquities for ever; but be jealous for thy land, and heal her backslidings, we beseech thee.

## CHAP. XXV.

### CONTENTS.

*Jerusalem is again besieged. Zedekiah is taken, his sons slain and his eyes put out. The close of the chapter relates that Jehoiachin, who had been long captive in Babylon, was brought out of prison by the kindness of the king, and set at his table.*

AND it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about.

2 And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

3 And on the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land.

As we read in the foregoing chapter that Jerusalem was taken, and here that it was besieged, we should remember in order to have a clear apprehension of the history, that though Jerusalem had been conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, yet it was not totally subdued as a kingdom, because the conqueror appointed a king to govern it. But here we find a total ruin. And what made the approach and siege of Jerusalem now yet more terrible was, God's judgments were upon it. A famine joined with the sword to avenge God's quarrel with his people for their sin. Alas! to what a state will sin reduce any and every man! I wish the Reader, while attending to the history of the total overthrow of Jerusalem, would read the prophecy of Jeremiah, and especially the book of Lamentations, all of which relate to this occasion. It should seem, from what Jeremiah told Zedekiah, that he had it in commission from the Lord to point out yet a method of deliverance, but Zedekiah rejected the counsel of God, as sinners still do against their own souls. See Jeremiah, chap. 37, 28, 39.

4 ¶ And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round

about:) and *the king* went the way toward the plain.

5 And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him.

6 So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him.

7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

The history in this place is but shortly related, just to manifest God's certain judgments: but very long and painful must have been the process of them in their execution. Jeremiah had been long preaching of them, and was much opposed, as faithful ministers are, more or less, in all ages in this service. Hananiah, the lying prophet, had daringly opposed him, and was as awfully cut off. But yet these judgments left no lasting effect upon the minds of the people. See Jer. 28.

8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh *day* of the month, which *is* the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem.

9 And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great *man's* house burnt he with fire.

10 And all the army of the Chaldees, that *were with* the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

Pause, Reader! over the perusal of these verses. Behold the very temple of the Lord amidst the general ruins. And now Zion is plowed as a field, as the prophet Micah had foretold; Micah. iii. 12. which prophecy the prophet Jeremiah quotes in confirmation of his own. See Jer. xxvi. 18. Thus the temple of Solomon, which had stood the ornament of the whole world for more than 420 years, was now rased to the ground. Jeremiah most pathetically laments over this in his book of Lamentations, chap. ii. 1—9. iv. 12. It hath been said by historians, (and I believe they gathered the account from Josephus) that in the after ages of the church, when, as our Lord predicted Jerusalem should the second time be destroyed by the Romans, as here it was by the Chaldeans, both events were accomplished on the very same day of the month.

11 Now the rest of the people *that were* left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carry away.

12 But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land *to be* vinedressers and husbandmen.

13 And the pillars of brass that *were* in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brasen sea that *was* in the house of the LORD, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the brass of them to Babylon.

14 And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away.

15 And the firepans, and the bowls, *and* such things as *were* of gold, *in* gold, and of silver, *in* silver, the captain of the guard took away.

16 The two pillars, one sea, and the bases which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD; the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

17 The height of the one pillar *was* eighteen cubits, and the chapter upon it *was* brass: and the height of the chapter three cubits; and the wreathen work, and pomegranates upon the chapter round about, all of brass: and like unto these had the second pillar with wreathen work.

18 And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

19 And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and three-score men of the people of the land *that were* found in the city.

20 And Nebuzar-adan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah:

21 And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.

Here we have the final account of Judah as a kingdom. So that from Joshua's days, in which it began to be formed, to the last of its kings, Zedekiah, it stood about 850 or 860 years. And the church's history now begins from the Babylonish captivity. Daniel and Ezekiel were the two prophets, whose ministry was exercised in Babylon during the 70 years which the Lord had determined for its desolation. See Jeremiah xxv. 8—13, and Chap. xxix. 10—14. See also Isaiah, Chap. xxiii. 15.

22 And *as for* the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler.

23 And when all the captains of the armies, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, there came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Careah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of a Maachathit, they and their men.

24 And Gedaliah swore to them, and to their men, and said unto them, Fear not to be the servants of the Chaldees: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon; and it shall be well with you.

25 But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah.

26 And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the Chaldees.

Jeremiah had told Baruch that his life should be given for a prey,

and here we find certain of the people were preserved, Jer. xlv. 5. It was the mercy of God, in the midst of judgment, to incline the King of Babylon to preserve some of the people, and to have Gedaliah, a faithful man, made Governor. And no doubt many of the faithful availed themselves of his mild government. But yet we see, even in the midst of judgments, as in the case of Ishmael, how evil men will exercise their dreadful purposes. What became of those who upon this event fled to Egypt, is not said. Perhaps the Lord had some gracious design in the permission. See Isaiah in that sweet prophecy, Isaiah xix. 18—25.

27 And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth *day* of the month, *that* Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison ;

28 And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that *were* with him in Babylon ;

29 And changed his prison garments : and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life.

30 And his allowance *was* a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.

It is hardly possible to read the wonderful change in the circumstances of Jehoiachin, who, after so long a period as thirty-seven years lying in a prison, is brought forth to liberty, and to the king's table, without having our minds led out in the contemplation, how wonderful the changes sometimes are in human life. But oh ! what a change is that in grace, when from the prison of death and sin, the soul is brought forth to the light and liberty of the gospel. When Jesus opens the door in conversion, and calls forth the captives of Satan from the prison-house ! When by the blood of his Covenant, Jehovah sends forth his prisoners of hope from the pit in which is no water. Zach. ix. 11. And Reader ! carry on the idea, and think if it be possible, what everlasting freedom that will be, when death itself shall, at the voice of Jesus, give up his dead, and all the children of Jesus shall sit down at his table, to go out no more ! Precious thought ! may it warm my heart amidst all the changeable events in the providences of my God and Saviour, during the whole of this life, and amidst the revolutions of all things here below : may it be the portion of both Writer and Reader to live on an unchangeable God in Christ Jesus, who is now the peace of his people, and will be their glory for evermore !

## REFLECTIONS.

READER! we are brought to the final close of Judah's history as a kingdom in this Chapter; and therefore let us pause over the subject, and in beholding the desolated state of Zion as a church, take up the lamentation of the mournful prophet and say, *How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!*

And as we pause and behold the desolation, let us look back at her former felicity, and ask the cause of her present ruin. *Beautiful for situation*, (said one of old) *the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion*. Here was not only the royal city of David, but the holy city of our God, even David's Lord. It was *the Lord that founded Zion*, (saith one that answereth the messengers of the nation) *and the poor of his people shall trust in it*. But where is she now? *The Lord hath cast down Zion in the day of his fierce anger*.

And wherefore hath the Lord done this to Zion? Alas! alas! because Zion hath forsaken her God, therefore is she gone into captivity, and her kings and priests with her. But will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be no more intreated? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? And will he shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure?

Reader! connect with this view the precious redemption by Jesus. Behold him who came for the recovery of Zion, not merely from the captivity of Babylon, but from the more dreadful captivity of sin and death. Look at Jesus in the accomplishment of redemption, opening the doors of confinement, bringing the prisoners from the prison, and them that sat in darkness out of the prison-house. Yes, blessed Jesus! the Spirit of the Lord was upon thee, and thou hast come to make a thorough change in all the circumstances of thy people; and not merely to bring thy captives, like Jehoiachim, from the prison to thy table, but to exchange their prison-garments to the robes of salvation and glory. Thou wilt bring them all home to thy house; thou wilt raise up the tabernacles of David that are fallen down, for according to thy promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, even the new Jerusalem, *wherein righteousness shall dwell for ever*. Hail! thou holy, blessed, Lord Jesus! Hail thou Almighty conqueror of all the foes of our salvation! Shortly thou wilt come to take all thy banished ones home, and the ransomed of Zion shall return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.