

## J U D G E S.

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

**I**T is not very certain who was the immediate Penman of this book. Some writers have supposed that it was *Samuel*. However this cannot be depended upon. The subject itself contained in it is much more interesting for us to regard. And the object intended from the records here presented to the church, seems to be directed to those two grand purposes; namely, to shew how unsuitably God's people conducted themselves to the privileges they enjoyed; and yet, in the midst of their unworthiness, how gracious the Lord manifested himself towards them.

The Book of the Judges comprizes in point of time a period of about 300 years; commencing from about 1400 years before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to about 1100 years; and recording the annals of 14 Judges, from *Othniel* to *Eli* included.

There is much of gospel shadows and types, both as to persons and things, in the several parts of the Book of the Judges. The Holy Ghost was graciously pleased to cause many striking allusions to the great events of salvation, to be represented during the period of the church, which this book refers to. And several of the persons, whose history forms a part in this scripture, were eminent types and servants of the Lord Jesus. The Apostle to the Hebrews makes special mention of several of them, and with the most honourable testimony, as very illustrious patterns of faith; such as *Gideon*, and *Barak*, and *Samson*, and *Jephthah*. Heb. xi. 32.

I shall not detain the Reader with any further preliminary observations on the Book of Judges. But I must request him before he enters upon the perusal of it, that he will bend the knee of prayer, and join my spirit in a fervent supplication to the mercys seat of our God in Christ, that the minds of both Writer and Reader may be under the teachings of God the Holy Ghost, to behold in every period and age of the church, how the Lord hath been carrying on the great purposes and counsels of his own will, and gradually preparing the minds of the faithful for that glorious æra, when his people should not be under the commonwealth of Judges, but *a King should reign in righteousness, and execute judgment, and justice in the earth: in whose days Judah should be saved, and Israel dwell safely. And this is the name whereby he should be called, the Lord our Righteousness.*

Reader! may our souls rejoice together, that our God in mercy hath caused us to see this day. We may truly take up the language of the Prophet, and make application of his sweet words to our

own circumstances, and say, as he did, *The Lord is our Judge; the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our King.* Isaiah xxxiii. 22.

## CHAP. I.

### CONTENTS.

*The sacred historian prosecutes in this Chapter the subject of Israel's contest with the remaining Canaanites, after the death of Joshua. The chapter opens in the enquiry of Israel of the Lord, who should go before them to the subjugation and destruction of their enemies. The Lord's answer. The several tribes divide in their war, some are successful more than others. Several of the tribes permit the Canaanites to remain with them, contrary to the command of the Lord.*

**N**OW after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first to fight against them?

2 And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold I have delivered the land into his hand.

If the Reader regards the book of the Judges merely as an history, still he will discover in it sufficient to demonstrate the faithfulness of God to his promises. But, if he reads it also with a spiritual reference to the church of God shadowing forth beside the history some greater events connected with it, he will find this *Sepher Shophetim* (for so is it, in the original, very properly called, that is, *the Book of Judges*) not an uninteresting part of the sacred record. As Joshua was an eminent type of Jesus, do we not feel our minds led to the gospel history, and the case of the apostles, at the departure of Jesus? Well might the disciples enquire who shall go in and out before us, when the Lord is returned to his Father? See John xiv. 1, 2. We cannot be at a loss to assign the cause, wherefore Judah was chosen. The dying Patriarch looking forward to him who after the flesh was to spring from Judah, declared, that *Judah was him whom his brethren should praise, whose hand should be in the neck of his enemies, and whose father's children should bow down before him.* Gen. xlix. 8, &c. And when we behold him who is expressly called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, whom all nations shall praise, and whose victory over the neck of his enemies hath been so marked, we cannot but discover the striking affinity. Heb. vii. 14. Rev. v. 5.

3 And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.

4 ¶ And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

5 And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

I would have the Reader observe, that the victory is ascribed to the Lord. Sweetly may this be said in all our spiritual conflicts, *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.* Zech. iv. 6.

6 But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

7 And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered *their meat* under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

*Adoni-Bezek* signifies the Lord of Bezek, the prince of the place. There should seem to have been some particular direction respecting this prince's punishment, in that he owned the justice of it. Is it not frequently so in common life?

8 ¶ Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.

It should seem that, as this verse is inclosed in a parenthesis, it only meant to notice what had been said before. Probably Jerusalem was taken in the wars of Joshua. See Joshua x. 1, &c.

9 And afterwards the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.

10 And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before *was* Kirjath-arba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

Judah, under the banner of the Lord, goeth on victoriously. Reader! how profitable is it ever to keep in view His arm, in whom alone we are victorious? If God be for us, who shall be against us? That is a sweet scripture, and a sweet promise, Isaiah liv. 15—17.

11 And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before *was* Kirjath-sepher:

12 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

14 And it came to pass, when she came *to him*, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off *her* ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?

15 And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.

We had this interesting account before, in the preceding book of Joshua, to which I therefore refer the Reader. See Joshua xv. 15—19.

16 And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm-trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which *lieth* in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

Doth not this account of the *Kerites* being with Judah throw some light upon that part of Israel's history, which we read respecting them in a period distant from this more than thirty years? See Numb. x. 29, &c. The *Kerites* were of this man's family.

17 And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah.

18 Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.

19 And the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out *the inhabitants of* the mountain; but



could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

Here we trace the want of faith, and consequently the want of courage, in Israel. What were the chariots of iron, when God fought the battles of Israel? But is not this, in a spiritual sense, the very case of Israel now? The faith of Peter could prompt him to attempt walking on the water, to come to Jesus, at his command. But we are told that when he saw the waves boisterous, his faith forsook him. Oh! for a portion of that faith which can quench the violence of fire, and out of weakness can make strong. Heb. xi. 34.

20 And he gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

Though *Joshua*, we are told, had given this place to *Caleb* before, yet the possession of it was probably only now. See *Joshua* xiv. 13, 14. And were not the victories of Jesus the same? Though *Jehovah* had given him the heathen for his inheritance, as well as to raise up the tribes of Jacob; yet Jesus had to conquer both before that he took possession of either. But under the sure prospect Christ considers them as already obtained. *Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine. All mine, (Christ said to the Father) are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.* Psm. lx. 7. John xvii. 10.

21 And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

Here we have another example of unbelief, and consequently of culpable timidity. The Lord had expressly commanded that there should be no affinity, nor treaty, with the Canaanites. But alas! Israel forgets the Lord's precept, and the Canaanites dwell in the land. Reader! Is it not too often so, with spiritual Israel? Oh! for that glorious period, when the Canaanite shall be no longer in the land, Zech. xiv. 21, compared with Deut. vii. 17, 18, 23, 24.

22 And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Beth-el: and the LORD was with them.

The success of the house of Joseph is particularly marked in the cause of it. The Lord was with them. In the Chaldee paraphrase of this passage it is said, *the word of Jehovah was with them*, a well known title of Jesus. And in this sense how very precious it is to see the Lord Jesus with his people, leading them on to sure conquest and victory! We have abundant reason to bless the Holy Ghost for the clear explanation of those passages which speak of the uncreated Word, in his decidedly referring to the person of Jesus, as that beautiful passage in the revelation shews, chap. xix. 11—13.

23 And the house of Joseph sent to descry

Beth-el. (Now the name of the city before *was* Luz.)

*Bethel* is a memorable name in scripture, ever since the Patriarch Jacob made it so. All true believers in Jesus know this name, and can tell, as Jacob did, what Bethel visits mean. Reader! was not that spot, that place, a true Bethel, or house of God to your soul, when the visions of God first began? See Gen. xxviii. 19. Exod. iii. 2—6.

24 And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy.

25 And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family.

26 And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which *is* the name thereof unto this day.

Is there not a spiritual illustration of this scripture? May we not, without overstraining the passage, observe that the man, shewing the house of Joseph the way into the city, but afterwards departing to the *Hittites*, and still preserving the original name of *Luz*, is a representation of those who act as ministers in the Lord's hand, to shew the spiritual house of Joseph the way to the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, but not settling in it themselves? Like direction posts on the road, which point the traveller on his journey, but move not a step towards it. Very different are those guides spoken of in scripture, who not only direct to the way of salvation, but say, *Come, and let us go up to the house of the Lord.* Micah iv. 2.

27 Neither did Manasseh drive out *the inhabitants of* Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.

29 Neither did Ephraim drive out the Ca-

naanites that dwelt in Gezer ; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

30 Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol ; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.

31 Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob :

32 But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land : for they did not drive them out.

33 Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath ; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land : nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became tributaries unto them.

34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain : for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley :

35 But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim : yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.

36 And the coast of the Amorites *was* from the going up to Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

I include all these verses within one view, because one general observation suits the whole. We see in them the sad picture of Israel's want of faith, and consequently want of courage. Had those tribes trusted to the arm of God, they would not have feared the power of man. Had they called to mind that it was *their rock which had sold them, and that their Lord had shut them up*, their chariots of iron would have been considered by them but as the reeds of Egypt ; but *one of them would have chased a thousand, and two of them have put ten thousand to flight.* Deut. xxxii. 30. But Reader ! while we behold the sad defect of Israel, let us look nearer home. How often doth that guilt breed fear, which like the *Canaanite*, dwells in our hearts, in

our affections and lusts; and hence we forget our strength in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Oh! for more of that faith in lively exercise, which overcometh the world. 1 John v. 4.

### REFLECTIONS.

SEE, my soul, in the history of Israel, what conflicts await the believer after a work of grace is begun in the heart. *Let not him that putteth on the harness boast like him that putteth it off.* Never, until that we undress for the grave, can the soldiers in the holy army of Jesus be said to have done with battle. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.* But oh! what a sweet relief to the mind is it, in the consciousness that the issue is not doubtful. Though the Canaanite be still in the land, the promise is, that he shall not always be. *There is a rest which remaineth for the people of God.* Blessed God! comfort the souls of thy people with this assurance. And, until the day of deliverance comes, may we fight under his banner, and in his strength, who is *the Lord our righteousness.*

Dearest Jesus! at the very mention of thy name, methinks, new strength is imparted to my soul. How infinitely dost thou transcend thy type of Israel's Joshua, in all that is precious and endearing! He was not able to continue, by reason of death. But *thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.* Oh! how sweet, how very sweet is that assurance! *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.* Be thou ever with me in all my trials, difficulties, and temptations. Be thou with me in all my happier hours of seeming prosperity and quiet. Be thou ever with me, to soften every evil, and to heighten every joy. Upheld by thine arm, which bringeth salvation, I shall be more than conqueror. And surrounded with thy love, my cup will run over. Oh! for the lively actings of faith thus to be always in the spiritual company of Jesus, and to live to him and with him, to the Father's praise, and the Spirit's grace, which maketh his people *accepted in the beloved.*

## CHAP. II.

### CONTENTS.

*This Chapter contains an interesting account of the appearance of an angel, with a message from God to Israel. The sacred historian also takes a retrospective view of Israel's conduct under Joshua, by way of pointing out their sad departure after his death. The people's behaviour on the subject of God's message.*

**A**ND an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you into the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

2 And ye shall make no league with the inha-

bitants of this land: ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

I beg the Reader to remark with me the leading feature in the character of this angel, and then let him determine for himself whether it was not the Angel of the Covenant, even the Lord Jesus Christ. Who but God could make use of this language, *I made you to go up out of Egypt?* And who was it that sware unto their fathers, but Jehovah? Oh! how very precious is it to trace the footsteps of him *whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting?* Didst thou, dearest Jesus, long for the season of thine incarnation? And didst thou adopt this method of shewing thy love to our nature, by such tokens? See Exod. xxxiii. 1. Micah v. 2. *Gilgal*, from whence the angel is said to have come, could not but remind the people of the renewal of the covenant by circumcision, and which, as it was taking away their reproach, was called *Gilgal*. See Joshua v. 2 and 9. The purport of the angel's message was reproof, in which the Lord explains wherefore their enemies were not wholly subdued. In their continuance as thorns in their sides, the word of God was fulfilled. See Exod. xxiii. 33. Numb. xxxiii. 35. Deut. vii. 16.

4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.

5 And they called the name of that place *Bochim*: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

The effect of the Sermon of the angel was as might be supposed. They were stung to the heart in the recollection of God's mercy, and their unworthiness; and they wept. *Bochim* means *weepers*. Was not this sacrifice offered with an eye to the one great sacrifice? Let the Reader compare this passage with a similar one in the same book, and see whether there be not a correspondence? Surely there is much of Jesus here. See Judges xiii. 3. 19, 20.

6 ¶ And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers : and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

These verses have a retrospective view to the history of Joshua, as before related. And perhaps the subject is here again introduced, by way of contrasting the sad apostacy of Israel, to what their conduct had been during the life of Joshua, and that generation. Alas! when good men perish from the earth, what a melancholy thought is it, if an evil generation succeed them. The prophet makes a woeful lamentation of this, but forms a sweet resolution therefrom, that he will cease from man, and look unto the Lord. Micah vii. 2—7.

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim :

12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

13 And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

Here begins the sad account which the Holy Ghost hath caused to be recorded, of Israel's whoredom and idolatry, and which runs through all the future periods of their history, until they were unchurched. Sad, sad relation of poor human nature! And the more so, when we consider the resemblance it bears to God's church in all ages. They served *Baal*, and *Baalam*, and *Ashtaroth*; single gods, and double gods: for *Baal* is singular, meaning one particular heathen god; and *Balaam* is plural, signifying many. And *Ashtaroth* was a goddess. See Kings xi. 5. Oh! Israel, Israel! how art thou fallen! How sweet and expressive, but yet painfully feeling, is that expostulation of the Lord by the prophet. Micah vi. 1, 2, &c.

14 ¶ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold

them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15 Whithersoever they went out the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

Observe in the Lord's punishment, what a correspondence between their sin and suffering. *Thy backslidings shall reprove thee.* Jer. ii. 19. Reader! do not overlook the interest all God's people bear in this. Trace divine chastisements in your own experience, and you will not be far to learn, if so be the Holy Ghost is your Teacher, that the Lord's corrections follow close upon his people's transgressions.

16 Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

What a beautiful illustration is this of divine mercy? How sweetly doth it come in here, in proof of God's covenant love? Let the Reader never lose sight of it. And, if he wishes to bring into one and the same point of view, another precious example, let him read that most interesting representation the prophet makes of abounding grace, Isaiah xliii. 22—25. But Reader! when you have seen this, and compared the whole, is there no other even yet more affecting? What think you of *your own* history? Cannot you find enough there to lay low in the dust, in the contemplation, that where *sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound.* Rom. v. 20, 21,

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but* they did not so.

18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted *themselves* more than their fathers, in following other gods

to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

20 ¶ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people have transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not.

23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

All these verses fold up in their contents the two great leading points of the gospel doctrine, namely, human depravity, and divine benignity. In the forbearance of God, and the continued provocations of man, the language of the prophet meets us in all directions, and cries aloud, in all that is going on in life, *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?* But Reader! do not overlook the cause. The Prophet that thus speaks had it in commission from the Holy Ghost to assign the reason; for he adds, that it was to *perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham*. Yes, blessed Jesus! thou art the mercy promised. And it was in thee, and thy promised salvation, Jehovah manifested his pardoning love and mercy to Israel. Reader! I charge it upon you to read that most precious and interesting account of this love, which the Prophet gives. Isaiah lxiii. 7, to the end.

#### REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! read again, and again, thine own history in this account of Israel's departure and backsliding. Can any portrait be more strikingly drawn! How hath the Lord overlooked and passed by thy disobedience! By how many messages of grace, like the angel from *Gilgal*, hath the Lord sent to call thy ways to remembrance? Oh! for the gracious office of God the Holy Ghost, to act as the Remembrancer in my forgetful heart, to make my soul like *Bochim* before God.

Dearest Jesus! how increasingly interesting, in every renewed view of my unworthiness, is thy lovely person, and thy complete righteousness. Oh! mayest thou be made to me *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanc-*



*tification, and redemption.* I see, I feel, and groan under the recollection, in how many things I offend and come short of thy glory. Though like Joshua to Israel, I hope and trust thou hast begun to magnify thy great name in bringing me into the privilege of thy people, yet too many of the Canaanites are in the land. I do not see *all things put under thy feet*: But I look forward with the hope, that in thy strength and power, I shall by and by, be enabled to put my feet upon the neck of these foes. Lord! in thy name let me rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness be exalted.

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## CHAP. III.

### CONTENTS.

*The subject which opened in the preceding Chapter, of the backsliding of Israel from the Lord, is prosecuted in this. Here are inserted the names of Israel's enemies, which acted as instruments in the divine hand, for Israel's correction. Some account of their punishment, and of their humiliation in consequence thereof, is also given in this Chapter. God's gracious interposition in the deliverance of Israel, by Othniel, from the oppression of their foes, and by Ehud, and Shamgar, three of the first judges, is also related.*

**N**OW these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, *even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan*;

2 Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;

3 *Namely*, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath,

4 And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

This is an interesting chapter, and the first verse acts as a key to let us into the meaning of it. The Lord, we are told, *left those nations to prove Israel*. Hence we learn, that the trials of God's people are of God's appointment. I stay not to dwell much upon the historical part of it, for I think it quite enough to observe, that the *five* lords of the Philistines, which, in after ages of the days of the kings of Israel, made such a figure in history, were the lords of *Ashdod*, and *Gaza*, and *Askelon*, and *Gath*, and *Ekron*. 1 Sam. vi. 17. And *all* the Canaanites, included the idolatrous inhabitants from the extreme point of

Israel's territories. But I rather would call the Reader's attention to the spiritual sense of the history. There is a passage in the Psalms that serves to shew how the Lord raiseth up scourges for his people in their enemies, where it is said, that *the Lord turned the hearts of the Egyptians to hate his people*. Psm. cv. 25. Hence in all the afflictions for sin, the Lord's hand is in every appointment. And this, Reader, may serve to illustrate the whole of our eventful life. Love is at the bottom of all the Lord's dispensations. He is ever pursuing one invariable plan of mercy. But if the followers of Jesus transgress, and are led away by their idolatrous neighbours, God will visit their offences with the rod, and their sins with the scourge. So the promise runs, Psalm lxxxix. 30—32.

5 ¶ And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:

6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

7 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves.

Those who have no knowledge of the corruption of the human heart, would be at a loss to conceive the possibility of such abominable conduct in Israel. But alas! what is not the human heart capable of doing, if left for one moment to itself! Read that solemn scripture, and pause over it, with an eye to self. Jeremiah xvii. 9.

8 ¶ Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years.

Here we have the relation of the first conqueror of Israel. King of *Mesopotamia* means, *in the midst of rivers*; probably so called from being situated between the two great rivers, the *Euphrates* and the *Tigris*. Eight years subjugation, no doubt, was long and grievous. Alas! how many years do God's people groan under the powerful enemies both within and without, which rise against them by reason of their rebellion.

9 And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, *even* Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

Observe; before Israel's deliverance there was a cry to God for relief. How sweet is it to see when from the first *descent* of grace in the

heart, the soul goes forth in the *ascending* prayer for mercy. Dearest Jesus! let thy prevenient grace be shed abroad in my heart; and then, the earnest supplication for mercy in thy all prevailing blood and righteousness, will be sure to bring relief down.

10 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand: and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim.

*Othniel* is the first judge of Israel after Joshua's death. But Reader! do not fail to observe, how he became the deliverer of Israel. It was because the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. Oh! how precious is it to see that uniformity in every instance: that it is, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. And was it not so with the Lord Jesus? And must not the same blessed Spirit which anointed Jesus to his office, anoint also his church and people? Isaiah lxi. 1.

11 And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Observe how many years the land had rest after God's deliverance. But oh! what an everlasting rest remaineth for the people of God, when Jesus hath given them rest, who is indeed himself the rest of his weary and afflicted ones. Heb. iv. 9. Matt. xi. 28.

12 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.

There is a great degree of meaning in that little word *again*. Israel did evil again. Even *Israel*, God's people, and who had received from the Lord such a series of mercies. And what made their iniquity the more odious was, that it was *again*, after that they had smarted for it, and after so much mercy. But Reader! in Israel behold the church of God in all ages. Oh! what departures, again and again, in the Lord's people! This was the aggravated sin of Solomon; 1 Kings ii. 9.

13 And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees.

14 So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

The last servitude was *eight* years, and this *eighteen*. Observe, how the Lord, according to his promise, increaseth the stripes upon increased rebellion. See Levit. xxvi. 27, 28.

15 But when the children of Israel cried unto

the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left-handed: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

Reader! do not fail to remark, how grace manifests itself in the heart. When the Lord is about to appear in any remarkable manner, very frequently he sets his people to prayer. And then that promise is fulfilled, Isaiah lxxv. 24. Read another, to the same effect, Isaiah xxx. 18. This *Ehud* was the *second* judge of Israel, after the death of Joshua. It is particularly recorded of him that he was left handed, and a *Benjamite*. The name *Benjamin*, signifies the son of the *right* hand. And therefore it is perhaps mentioned, as being the more remarkable. Jesus, as the deliverer of his people, is emphatically called, the 'Man of Jehovah's *right* hand. Psalm lxxx. 17.

16 But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.

17 And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab; and Eglon *was* a very fat man.

18 And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present.

19 But he himself turned again from the quarries that *were* by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him.

20 And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of *his* seat.

21 And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly:

22 And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out.

23 Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them.

24 When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour *were* locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.

25 And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took a key, and opened *them*: and, behold, their lord *was* fallen down dead on the earth.

26 And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath.

27 And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them.

28 And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over.

29 And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man.

Every circumstance related in this transaction, manifests that it was of God. *Eglon* was overawed at the supposed message from God, so as to arise. His servants were blinded to any thoughts of suspicion, from this visit of an enemy. And the event, in *Ehud's* safety, until he had escaped beyond the power of seizing him, carries evidence to the same purpose. And lastly, added to all, the destruction of Moab after *Eglon's* death, plainly testified that the thing was of the Lord. But oh! what a sweet thought is it to the oppressed of the true Israelites, that when the Holy Ghost awakens the cry for mercy, and deliverance, in the hearts of his people, how all things conspire to give sure conquest, in the name and strength of Jesus. That is a sweet scripture to this effect, in which the promise runs, *For the oppression of the poor, and*

*the sighing of the needy, now will I arise saith the Lord.* Psalm xii. 5.

30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.

The event of this deliverance was more abundant than the former. *Eighty* years Israel enjoyed peace. It is peace, and always peace, when Jesus hath made our peace in the blood of his cross. And what an everlasting peace will that be, which the Son of God hath caused in the great trumpet of his salvation being sounded, *when they shall come which are ready to perish.* Isaiah xxvii. 13.

31 ¶ And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.

This *Shamgar* was the *third* of the Judges which judged Israel. We have but a short account of him. But even this is as a Deliverer. As he rescued Israel from the Philistines, I am inclined to think the seat of his government lay *south*, and not to the *east*, on the banks of Jordan, as the situation of *Ehud's* must have been. It is probable that *Shamgar's* deliverance of Israel was suddenly effected, as the weapon by which he wrought it should seem to intimate. What instruments are too weak when the Lord commissions them! Rams horns can blow down the walls of Jericho, and the foolishness of preaching turn men from darkness to light, when the Lord gives the word. Joshua vi. 20. 1 Cor. i. 21.

#### REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! learn here again, in the history of Israel, how much in all ages the church of God is the same, and how uniformly the Lord is training his people for himself. God leaves his people in the midst of their enemies, to try them, and to prove them. As polished stones, for his temple, they are long preparing, and all the plan of his proceedings towards them, is mercy and goodness. But oh! how very precious is it to see, in Israel's history, how every thing pointed to the Lord Jesus. Brought, as the people were, by sin and rebellion, into a state of repeated slavery, God raised up the several judges as their deliverers. But what are *Othniel*, *Ehud*, and *Shamgar*, compared to him who delivereth his people from the wrath to come, and whose deliverance is everlasting! Look up, my soul, to Jesus, when the corruptions from within, or foes from without, would bring thee again into bondage; and in the cry of distress and sorrow to the Lord, oh for faith to behold Jesus the sent and sealed of the Father, to drive out thine enemies from before thee, and to make thee more than conqueror through him that loveth thee.

## CHAP. IV.

## CONTENTS.

*Few events in the history of Israel, are more interesting than what this Chapter contains, of the defeat of Sisera's army by Barak, under the animated zeal of Deborah. Here are the several particulars related which gave birth to that war; with the event of it, in the conquest over the enemies of Israel, by a wonderful interposition of the Lord for his people.*

**A**ND the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD when Ehud was dead.

The chapter begins with a melancholy account of God's people. They did again evil. Alas! God's people are by nature children of wrath, even as others. My people, saith God, are bent to backsliding. Hosea xi. 7. Is it so, my soul, that there is in thy very nature a tendency to evil? Oh! precious, precious Jesus, what but for thee and thy perfect, all-satisfying, soul-justifying righteousness, would be the hope of all thy people?

2 And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host *was* Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.

I beg the Reader not to overlook the expression, "the Lord sold them." Yes! every event, as well afflictive as prosperous, is of the Lord's appointment. Painful as the Lord's corrections sometimes are, yet, when his hand is traced in them, and the heart is enabled to say, *I know, Lord, that thy judgments are right*, this brings the soul up to its proper frame, Psalm cxix. 75.

3 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron: and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

Observe how grace works. The cry of the soul, and that cry directed unto the Lord; these are sure marks of grace. If the Reader would see the contrast of this, it will not be far to find. Carnal men will cry out, in their affliction, and by reason of the multitude of oppressions, complain. But their cry is not to God for deliverance; none of them saith, Where is God my Maker? Job xxxv. 9, 10.

4 And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

The Holy Ghost hath thought proper to render this woman's name illustrious in the Church. Some have thought that, as *Lapidoth* is not a very common name for a man, and rather means *light*, and *illumination*, the expression is symbolical, for the extraordinary degree of grace imparted to Deborah, and particularly on this occasion, of delivering Israel. Be this as it may, certain it is, that she was highly esteemed; for the people came to her for judgment.

6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali, and of the children of Zebulun?

7 And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude: and I will deliver him into thine hand.

Under the impression of the Holy Spirit of the Lord, Deborah evidently sent this message to *Barak*. And it should seem that in it, by the manner of her expression, in which she asketh, as it were, the question of Barak, both Barak and the children of Israel understood it to be of the Lord. *Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded?* Reader! do observe, I pray you, the antiquity of that most precious doctrine, of the *divine drawings*. Yes! blessed God! it is thy drawings which alone inclines the heart to Jesus, and by which the souls of thy people are kept near thyself, Song i. 4. John vi. 44.

8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, *then* I will not go.

9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

I do not think that *Barak*, by this answer, manifested fear; but rather, it arose from the confidence he had, that by her accompanying him, the people would be the more convinced that the thing was of the Lord.

10 And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him.

Though the Lord's army were, by the express orders of Deborah, to be gathered from those two tribes, yet from some expressions we meet



with after in Deborah's song, it should seem that there were others, who were, perhaps, volunteers in this sacred service. See chap. v. 15.

11 Now Heber the Kenite, *which was* of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses; had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, *which is* by Kedesh.

The account of this *Kenite* is very properly introduced here, in order to explain what afterwards follows in the history, verse 17.

12 And they shewed Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor.

13 And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, *even* nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that *were* with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon.

*Deborah* had promised *Barak* that the Lord would incline *Sisera* to the battle. And hence the sign of victory is instantly held out.

14 And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this *is* the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.

Oh! what lively faith did this animated woman possess! Observe the expression, *Is not the Lord gone out before thee?* Reader! what may we not insure to ourselves of success, in all the battles of our enemies, when we can see Jesus going before us, and leading on to victory? This is the apostle's direction, under the Holy Ghost, *looking unto Jesus*. Heb. xii. 2.

15 And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all *his* chariots, and all *his* host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off *his* chariot, and fled away on his feet.

16 But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; *and* there was not a man left.

Such, Reader, will be, and such even now is, the sure event of the wars of God's people, who fight under the banner of Jesus. There shall not a man be able to stand before thee all thy days. So run the words of the royal charter to our Joshua Jesus, and his people in him. Joshua i. 5,

17 Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for *there was* peace between Jabin the King of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

The peace here spoken of only implies that *Jabin* did not tyrannize over Heber's house, as over Israel's. The relationship on account of Moses, between Heber and Israel, could not have made Jabin's cruelties to Israel very pleasing.

18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle.

19 And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him.

20 Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No.

Perhaps *Jael* was on the look out, to shew mercy to any poor Israelite which might have fled from the battle. And if so, what must have been her surprise when she found *Sisera* at her door? Her hospitality to this sworn foe of Israel was no doubt intended for the better, and more easy accomplishment of the purpose, which probably by this time, when she saw his reduced strength and fatigue, she had conceived in her mind to perform.

21 Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

That this thing was of the Lord, no one can doubt, who considers that *Deborah* had before pointed out, under the Spirit of prophecy, that the Lord had sold Sisera into the hand of a woman. See verse 9. And from the eminent blessings which, under the same authority, Deborah proclaimed in her song of victory, should be bestowed upon her. See chap. v. 24.

22 And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest.

And when he came into her *tent*, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail *was* in his temples.

I leave the Reader to his own reflection, to consider what must have been the thoughts of Barak, concerning divine mercies, when he beheld *Sisera* dead before him, and was enabled to trace the Lord's hand in the whole battle. And I would equally leave the Reader to his own reflections, if he will make a comparative view of this subject, with the circumstances of his own life, if so be the Lord hath brought him acquainted with the spiritual conflicts in the life of grace, and hath at any time found such a glorious and unexpected deliverance as this from them. Oh! how sweet, how very sweet is it, to the true soldier of Jesus's little army, when he speaks of his grace as sufficient for him, and when the Lord's strength is literally made perfect in human weakness. 2 Cor. xiii. 9.

23 So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

24 And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

How beautifully the subject ends as it begun. It was not *Deborah*, nor *Barak*, nor the ten thousands of *Zebulun* and *Naphthali*, which got themselves the victory; but God himself which subdued their enemies, and brought down the king of Canaan under them. Sweetly doth the Holy Ghost teach Israel to sing upon another occasion, which corresponds to this. Psm. xlv. 1—4.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! I would call upon you while I desire grace to call up at the same time all the finer affections of my own heart, in the perusal of this chapter, to contemplate with fresh satisfaction, the renewed love and attention of the Lord to his people. *Again*, the Holy Ghost records, Israel did evil. And *again*, the Lord visits *their offences with the rod, and their sins with a scourge*. But oh! my soul do not forget, though it be the *rod*, it is the *rod of the covenant*. It is the rod of chastisement, the correction of a father, not the scourge of an enemy. For though the Lord raiseth up enemies to correct his children, those enemies are but his instruments, and can act no further than he commissions them. Oh! for grace to remember this, in all the gentle chastisements of his love. Dearest Lord! do thou, wherever needful, *hedge up my way with thorns, that I may not find my path*, when my way is perverse before thee. Bring me into the wilderness, and *plead with me face to face*, until that thou hast *purged out the rebels*, and the *lusts of transgression*; and until, by the sweet influences of thy Almighty grace, thou hast wrought a change in my soul, that I may say, *I will go, and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now*.

Blessed Lord! teach me, in the view of those humble instruments thou

wert pleased to make use of for the deliverance of thy people, never to *despise the day of small things*, but to learn the full assurance of that precious doctrine, that *it is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord*. Oh! for grace to be for ever leaning upon thy strength, thou dear Redeemer, and to know, that thy strength is perfected in weakness. Ever, dearest Lord, be thou my strength, my hope, and song of rejoicing. I shall be more than conqueror through thine arm helping me.

## CHAP. V.

### CONTENTS.

*This Chapter contains the second triumphant song of the church over her enemies. That at the Red Sea by Moses, is the only one prior to this which the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to have recorded on those memorable events. Probably with a view not only to shew the suitableness of praise for signal mercies, upon all occasions, but as a pattern for the after ages. Here are blended both praise and prayer. It begins with praise and ends in prayer, and celebrates both the divine goodness, and the instrumentality of human endeavours, crowned with God's power.*

**T**HEN sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

Observe, how soon the song of praise begun. It was *on that day*. What day so suited as the day of mercy? When the Lord comes near his people in grace, *then* ought his people to go near him in praise. Reader! have you began *your* song of deliverance from greater enemies than *Sisera* and his host? Hath Jesus said to you what he once said to *Zaccheus*? Luke xix. 9. Oh! how precious are the first visits of God to the soul! If the Lord remembers the day of our espousals, well may you and I. See Jer. ii. 1. Song iii. 11. It should seem that Deborah was both writer and speaker of this holy song. Evidently, therefore, a prophetess, and under divine influence. Oh! thou Holy Spirit, how sweet and extensive are thy teachings! See that blessed Scripture, and behold its fulfilment at Pentecost, and yet more particularly, look after the gracious effects now in the church of Jesus, among his people, and in your own heart. Joel ii. 28, 29. Acts ii. 16—18. Isaiah liv. 13. John xiv. 26.

2 Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.

It is precious to begin with Hallelujah. It resembles the worship of heaven. Praise is comely for the righteous. And oh! what unceasing cause do the redeemed of the Lord find for it! I have often admired that sweet expression to this purpose, in Psalm cvii. 2.

3 Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, *even* I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.

The sacred song begins with calling upon the great ones of the earth to attend to it. Let impious princes take warning by the fate of Sisera. Let righteous princes never forget by whom they reign, and under whose authority they act. Psm. ii. 10—12. There is a great beauty in the humbleness of Deborah's mind. Here is not a word of merit to herself, but all praise is referred unto the Lord Jehovah. Oh! how sweet it is, when the Lord hath exalted his people to the view of others, that they lay low themselves the more, and exalt him the higher. Isa. ii. 11.

4 LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.

5 The mountains melted from before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.

Here is a beautiful retrospect to the Lord's former mercies for his people, and to his former manifestations on Mount Sinai. The Holy Ghost taught the Prophet *Habakkuk* to record similar things. Hab. iii. 3, 4. It is always profitable to connect in one and the same view, God's *past* with his *present* mercies. It shews his unchangeableness in his love to his people. And it serves to beget faith in the same for what is to come. God in Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Heb. xiii. 8.

6 In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways.

7 *The inhabitants of* the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.

8 They chose new gods; then *was* war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?

Deborah takes a most effectual method to heighten to the view of the people, the deliverance their God had wrought for them, by dwelling more particularly upon their former misery. From their last judge *Shamgar*, it should seem that their enemies would not allow them any judge or governor; consequently they had no ministration of justice. Hence their highways were infested with robbers, and the poor traveller was obliged to seek out his path through intricate ways. Trade from caravans was of course no more; nay, the very villages were deserted, and their fields not tilled. Every thing was wretched and miserable to poor Israel. The very places for drawing water it was dangerous to go to. And as for the armies of Israel, there seemed to be not a soldier among them. But wherefore this sad state? She says they had chose *new* gods; and this gave birth to the war. Alas! alas! that a nation so

favoured, so blessed, so upheld by Jehovah, should have so far fallen, as to leave the Lord for the dunghill gods of wood and stone. Reader! do turn to that portion of God's expostulation by the Prophet, and when you have perused it put your hand to your heart, and ask whether it is not but too applicable to yourself, and God's people in all ages? Jer. ii. 11—13.

9 My heart *is* toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD.

This is an interesting part of the song, in calling upon those whom the Lord had inclined to take a more active part in the service of the day. Psm. cx. 3.

10 Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way.

As she had so pathetically lamented in the former verse, that the soldiery of Israel had been so dispirited, that neither spear nor shield could be found among their armies, she now looks with pleasure upon them whom the Lord had inclined to be his instruments in this battle. Particular note is made of such, for while we behold the Lord's hand in all things, we give due praise to the Lord's instruments. They whom the Lord honours we ought to honour. White asses and mules were beasts of distinction in the early ages. See 2 Sam. xviii 9. Judges xii. 14.

11 *They that are delivered* from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, *even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants* of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates.

Special songs of praise are justly expected from those who by the victory are delivered from their fears. But is there not much of gospel here? Let the poor sinner, who by Jesus' deliverance from sin and death is brought out of all his fears, let him, for he is best qualified to speak of it, let him say what righteous acts of Jehovah have been displayed in saving his soul from death, and his feet from falling. Psalm xl. 2, 3.

12 Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

It should seem by this new and repeated call of the Prophetess, that she thought her soul was not as yet sufficiently roused to the service of praising God. And though she had put forth all her strength, yet she fell so far short of what she wished to say, that language failed. It is remarkable, that the Holy Ghost puts the same language in the mouth of the Church in after ages, when calling upon the great Head of his Church the Lord Jesus, under one of his well known characters, *The arm of Jehovah*. See Isaiah li. 9. And it is yet further remarkable,

that the Lord himself is, by the voice of the Prophet, calling upon the Church in the same words, to take hold of him in the moment of need. See Isa. lii. 1. I do not presume to say that it is so, but I would humbly ask the Reader to pause over the passage, and devoutly inquire whether Barak, in being called upon to lead his captivity captive, was not a type of the ever blessed Jesus? Yes! thou dearest Captain of our salvation, it is thou which didst lead thy captivity captive, when thou ascendest up on high; when thou hadst triumphed over principalities and powers, and hadst vanquished hell, death, and the grave. Psm. lxxviii. 18.

13 Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty.

There is a great beauty in this verse. It is more than probable that from the long oppression the enemies of Israel had exercised over them, God's people had been reduced in number. Yet, saith *Deborah*, the remnant were made victorious in this day over the mighty. Yea, such was the Lord's display of the sovereignty of his grace, that he made *me*, a poor woman a mother in Israel, to triumph over the powerful. Reader! do not forget to recollect that the promise is, *Satan shall be bruised under our feet shortly*. Rom. xvi. 20.

14 Out of Ephraim *was there* a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.

15 And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great thoughts of heart.

16 Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? for the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart.

17 Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches.

18 Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

19 The kings came *and* fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money.

20 They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

21 The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

22 Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones.

23 Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

24 Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

If the Reader, after reading all these verses as they stand in their proper places, will attend to the several things contained in them, he will find that Deborah takes a view of the whole army both for and against Israel. Praise is given expressly, and with particular mention, to such of the tribes of Israel as were foremost in the battle. Just reproof to the tribes which remained at home. The defection of *Reuben* is very pathetically lamented; and *Dan* and *Asher* are noticed with suitable regret for their indifferency. But while those who ought to have been alive to the service of God's cause are thus reproofed for not doing it, how delightfully doth Deborah dwell upon the Lord's interposition. The very stars fought from heaven on the side of God! I would desire the Reader to remark the confederacy of the kings. So earnest were they for the ruin of Israel, that contrary to their usage, in hiring out themselves and soldiers for gain, they were volunteers in the cause. Yes! to crush the Lord Jesus in his person, or in his people, the rulers of this world are confederate. Psalm ii. 1, 2. Observe how this person looks with a twofold aspect; curses to God's enemies: blessings to his friends. Is not this angel here spoken of as commending the execution of *Merom*, the Lord Jesus? Joshua v. 13, 14.

25 He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

26 She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

27 At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down:



at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

What a very high commendation hath the Holy Ghost been pleased to bestow on *Jaël*? There is but one beside of whom the same is said, and the occasion is yet concerning a much greater deliverance, see Luke i. 28.

28 The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot *so* long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

29 Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,

30 Have they not sped? have they *not* divided the prey; to every man a damsel *or* two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, *meet* for the necks of *them that take* the spoil?

What an awful contrast to the wife of *Heber* doth Sisera's mother appear! Little better than a common strumpet, she seems to rejoice in her son's supposed debaucheries, and those of his army, over the chastity of Israel's daughters. What a disgrace to the delicacy of her sex! How ripe for ruin! And Reader! do not overlook the honour she conferred on the daughters of Israel, though on her part perfectly undesigned, when she makes mention of the prey on their needle work. What a proof this was that Israel's daughters were renowned among the nations for their industry. *Not slothful in business, while fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*, are qualities the apostle joins in the character of God's people. Rom. xii. 11.

31 So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but *let* them that love him *be* as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

The song as beautifully ends in prayer as it had opened in praise: to the contents of which every lover of the Lord Jesus and his Church, cannot but say Amen. They who love God's church, must hate the foes of that church, for there is no being neutral in this holy war. The appeal of every heart is like the Psalmist's, Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22. Forty years rest was a blessed consequence of this victory. But oh! what an everlasting rest hath the Lord Jesus, by his victory obtained over sin, death, hell, and the grave! And how is he himself become the rest of the soul. Isaiah xxv. 8. Matt. xi. 28, 29. Heb. iv. 9.

## REFLECTIONS.

BEHOLD! my soul with holy joy, how infinite the resources are in the faithfulness of Israel's God! What hath he not wrought! What is he not able to accomplish! And although Israel merited it not, yet nevertheless Jehovah wrought for his name's sake, and that he might make his power to be known.

And is there nothing in all this, to lead the heart both of the writer and the reader in the discovery of similar deliverances? If *Deborah* and *Barak* had their day of triumph in the Lord's manifestations for Israel, cannot you and I look back, my brother, and count the day when we had cause to praise the Lord for the avenging of Israel? Oh! yes, I trust we may both well count the day when the Lord Jesus made bare his holy arm, and rescued our souls from the arrows of the enemy, in the place of drawing water from the wells of salvation. Long did our foes oppose our way, and the highways of ordinances were unoccupied by us, until that Jesus arose and led captivity captive. Then, dearest Lord, when thou wentest out of *Seir*, when thou marchest out of the field of Edom, then did the mountains of sin in our nature melt before the Sun of Righteousness at his rising, and Sinai with all its terrors gave way at the presence of Jesus. Oh! give us grace, dearest Redeemer, to awake and utter a song, even a song of salvation, to the Lord Jehovah. May this be the everlasting rejoicing of our hearts: *the Lord is our strength, and our song, and he is become our salvation.*

## CHAP. VI.

## CONTENTS.

*In the progress of the history of Israel, we are here presented in this Chapter, with an account of Israel's rebellion by sin against God, after the forty years rest which the Lord had given them from all their enemies, from the victory of Deborah and Barak. We are here told of their ill treatment by Midian: God's message to Israel by a prophet: Gideon is raised up for their deliverance: an angel appears to him to encourage him: the conduct of Gideon in consequence thereof.*

AND the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

What a sad representation doth the Holy Ghost give us in this renewed instance of Israel's sin, of poor human nature in its best characters. Reader! remember that this is God's people, God's church of whom we read. *My people* (saith the Lord) *are bent to backsliding.* Hosea xi. 7. Sweet is that promise, I will heal their backsliding. Hosea xiv. 4. For I hope that the Reader hath not now to learn, that unless the Lord heals, there is neither balm nor physician in Gilead, Jer. viii. 22. Reader, do not overlook the expression in this verse, that the Lord delivered Israel into the hand of *Midian*. For what is *Midian*? what are ten thousand enemies, except the Lord gives the power to scourge? Deut xxxii. 30. Besides, this is the very tenor of the Lord's covenant, Psalm lxxxix. 30, &c.

2 And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: *and* because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which *are* in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.

Reader! do not fail to remark with me how conscious guilt breeds fear. Is this Israel, victorious Israel, that skulks away, and from a contemptible people whom their fathers had overrun and almost destroyed. See Numb. xxxi. 7. But alas! is it not so with all God's Israel? Dearest Jesus! how doth a sense of my manifold departures from thee induce fear and timidity in my heart. And what confidence doth the enemy make of it, to create shyness in my trust in thee? I feel at such seasons the whole force of that scripture: Psm. xl. 12.

3 And *so* it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

4 And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; *for* both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

How hath the Holy Ghost marked with precision, this very state of punishment which the Lord exercises over the sins of his people. See Levit. xxvi. 16, 17.

6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.

Here is the first cry of grace which we meet with in the Lord's heritage under all their sufferings? Seven whole years of misery before that one cry to the Lord for deliverance is heard. No doubt Israel did as you and I have done under our sorrows, that is, tried every resource but the right, and every effort of human policy and human contrivance before application is made to God himself. And never would the heart of either be brought to God, unless that God by his grace in the heart had inclined the sinner to seek him. Doth the Reader know this? Is he most solemnly convinced of it. If not: oh! that the Holy Ghost may be his teacher! 1 John iv. 19.

7 ¶ And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites,

8 That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage.

Observe the sweet methods of God's grace. No sooner doth Israel cry but the Lord hears and answers. Indeed the promise is, Before my people call I will answer. The Lord waiteth to be gracious. Isaiah lxxv. 24. xxx. 18.

9 And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land;

10 And I said unto you, I *am* the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

Observe how by the ministry of a prophet, the Lord makes way for the salvation of his people. And is not God doing so now? Doth he not by the word of the gospel call upon sinners to return? Is he not by yet an higher messenger, even the Holy Ghost himself, preparing the heart for the cordial reception of Jesus? Oh! thou Holy Spirit, thou Almighty Teacher! how art thou unceasingly pleading and expostulating with the hearts of thy people, to endear to them Jesus? Reader, are you a backslider from the Lord? Have you been brought out of spiritual Egypt? And have you since that great and distinguishing mercy, forgotten the Lord God of your fathers? Surely if so, you will feel the great mercy of God in a personal application of what is here said. *Is this the kindness to thy friend?* 2 Sam. xvi. 17.

11 ¶ And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.

I cannot hesitate to believe, that this was that same Almighty angel who, all along from creation, at various times manifested himself to his people as occasion required, and as it pleased him. I say I cannot hesitate to form this conclusion, because he who is in this verse called an angel of Jehovah, is in the 14th verse expressly called Jehovah. And Reader! when you have duly compared this passage with several others, and compared also some of the expressions he was graciously pleased to make use of, such as in a very particular way, *Surely I will be with thee*, and the promise of victory; I shall hope if the Lord be your teacher, you will believe the same. See Gen. xxviii. 15. Exod. iii. 2—6. Yes, dearest Jesus! thy people taught by thy Spirit, are enabled to trace thee, in the footsteps of thy love frequently going before

and manifesting thyself to them otherwise than thou dost unto the world; and in a way and manner best known to thyself, long before thine incarnation, as if thou wert longing for that time to shew thine unequalled mercy to our fallen nature! Prov. viii. 22—31. I would have the Reader to remark with me, several very interesting things, connected with the relation of the appearance of this angel. Is there not somewhat similar to the general promulgation of the gospel, and of the coming of Jesus to his people? The prophet we are told first came to Israel, and then this angel. John the Baptist was the fore-runner of Christ. See Malachi iii. 1. John i. 19—23. And is it not so now, in the revelation of Jesus to his people? Doth not the Holy Ghost first convince of sin, and then of the righteousness of Jesus? See John xvi. 8. I would detain the Reader with another observation on this passage. When deliverance was about to be proclaimed to Israel from their sorrows, that deliverance was made known to those who were retired from the world, and engaged in their honourable employments. And was it not the same, when the angels made known to the shepherds, watching over their flocks by night, that a Saviour was then born to them in the city of David. Luke ii. 10, 11.

12 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, the LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where *be* all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

There is somewhat very striking in this short conversation; short as it is, it conveys much more than the mere words express. If this angel was, as the whole sense of the passage seems to intimate, the Lord Jesus, it is very true indeed, that the Lord was with him. The answer is also as striking: for according to the *Chaldee* reading of it, the words are, If the *Shechinah*, (the well-known character of the promised seed of the Lord) be our help, why then is all this befallen us? Reader! remark how common it is in all ages for the Lord's people to be a tried people. And Reader! add this other remark to the observation; if the Lord's people be a sinning people, their offences shall be visited with rods. Psm. lxxxix. 30, 31.

14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

I beg the Reader not to overlook the expression, *the Lord looked upon him*. Was there not somewhat particularly striking in this look of

the Lord? Surely his grace, his power, his love, his promised favor and protection, accompanied that look. Wonders have been wrought by the piercing eye of Jesus upon his people, no doubt like that of his look to Peter! Oh, dearest Jesus! let thine eye be upon me for good. Luke xxii. 61. There is somewhat very expressive, in the commission with which the look of the Lord was accompanied. *Go in this thy might.* What might? Not Gideon's might surely, but the might of the Lord, with which, in the moment of giving him his commission, the Lord endowed him. Oh! for the same grace and the same power, to go forth in the strength of the Lord God upon all occasions of our spiritual warfare, and to make mention of his righteousness only. Psalm lxxi. 16.

15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, where- with shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house.

This objection, if greater had not arisen in Gideon's mind after, would not have carried with it an evidence of little faith, for it bespoke great humbleness of soul, and a becoming spirit. It is a promise never to be forgotten, that the Lord resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. James iv. 6.

16 And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

Reader! do not overlook the gracious condescension of Jesus to the fears and doubts of his people, while you are reading this verse. It is thus, depend upon it, he deals with them all. Matt. xii. 20.

17 And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.

18 Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

From this intreaty it is evident that Gideon's heart was affected, and that he desired only additional evidences of the authority given to him. And I rather am inclined to think, that, as in former cases to Israel, in the appearances made to them by this angel, whom we cannot suppose Gideon was so little acquainted with the history of the church as not to know, he recollected that the Lord had more fully manifested who he was in the moment of offering sacrifice. Gideon prayed that he might have this privilege also, of offering it upon the present occasion. See Gen. xv. 7—18.

19 And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour:

the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought *it* out unto him under the oak, and presented *it*.

Observe, Gideon presented it to the angel! Wherefore? Did he know indeed that our Jesus *was*, as well as *now is*, a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck? Psalm cx. 4. Heb. vii. 15—17.

20 And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay *them* upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so.

21 Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that *was* in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

Observe the trials of faith. In pouring out the broth, and laying the flesh on the cold rock, would not both cool? And how then should both be fit for sacrifice? Is it not thus frequently done by the Lord to his servants, that against hope they may, by the influences of his Holy Spirit, believe in hope? Rom. iv. 18. But what I more earnestly beg the Reader not to lose sight of, in this passage, is the rock. Surely, nothing, under a symbolical representation, could more plainly point to Jesus as the sole cause of the acceptance of all sacrifice, when we call to mind that Christ was the Rock that followed Israel through the whole of the eventful history of the Church in the wilderness. And, moreover, it was on this Rock that Jehovah manifested himself to Moses, when he desired to see the face of God, as a proof of his commission. Oh! how sweet, how very sweet is it, to behold in one and the same point of view, that Jesus is both the sacrifice, and the high priest, and the altar, *from* whence the holy fire issues in approbation, and *on* which all offerings are presented.

22 And when Gideon perceived that he *was* an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.

The fear of Gideon, on the discovery, was very natural, and corresponded to what the Lord had himself long before told Moses concerning the sight of God. See Exod. xxxiii. 20. Reader! what a delightful view doth this give us of the person and offices of our adorable Redeemer. Jesus, by tabernacling in substance of our flesh, hath softened the awful majesty of God. In seeing Jesus, we behold the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. And seeing him, we see in him the Father also without danger. John i. 18. xiv. 9. Heb. i. 3.

23 And the LORD said unto him, Peace *be* unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.

There is a great beauty in this verse, if read in gospel language. The eye that beholds God in Christ, is so far from being in danger of death, that in him he beholds peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 2 Cor. v. 19.

24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it *is* yet in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.

*Jehovah Shalom*, means the Lord our Peace. As if he had said, The Lord is at peace with me. It is the title which in that very spot Gideon desired ever after to know his God by. And is it not so by the true believer in Jesus, after once the soul is brought into the possession of that peace with God which is in Christ Jesus? The Lord our peace; the Lord our Righteousness. But there is somewhat particularly striking in the uniform custom holy men of old had in recording divine mercies, and making the very spot for ever after memorable where the Lord manifested himself. See Gen. xvi. 13. xxii. 14. xxyiii. 19, &c. Reader! let you and I pause over the passage, and if we know any thing of God, ask our own hearts how many memorable spots we have cause to mark in the recollection of divine mercies, where we might call those places by all these names and many others, of *Jehovah-jireh*, *Jehovah Shalom*, *Jehovah our Righteousness*. Jer. xxiii. 6.

25 And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that *is* by it:

Perhaps this second visit of God was in a vision of the night. It should seem by this account that the house of Gideon was engaged in the worship of idols, as well as other houses in Israel. And if so, it serves to manifest an evidence of distinguishing grace, that from such an house the Lord should raise up a deliverer for Israel. Thus Abraham, when called of God, was an idolater. See Gen. xii. 1, 2. How marvellous are all the ways and works of God! Sweet, in confirmation of it, is that scripture, Rom. ix. 13—16. There is somewhat particularly striking in this direction concerning the *second* bullock. I do not presume to explain the reason: but I venture to suggest to the Reader's notice, another striking scripture of divine appointment, where the *second* is preferred before the first. See Gen. xxv. 23. I would have the Reader notice, that Baal's altar is to be thrown down before that the altar to Jehovah be erected. And the altar to Jehovah is not to be built in the same place; but upon the top of the very rock where the former manifestations had been made to him. Is not this, if looked at in gospel dress, a sweet token that both altar and sacrifice are to be offered *upon*, and *in*, and *through*, Jesus? Matt. xvi. 18.

26 And build an altar unto the LORD thy God



upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and *so* it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do *it* by day, that he did *it* by night.

Gideon's apprehension doth not seem to have arisen from fear of offence, in that he did it by night; but for fear of interruption, he wished to accomplish the divine command, and therefore did it perhaps the same night. He well knew the consequence of the people's displeasure, but which it should seem he did not fear.

28 And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that *was* by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar *that was* built.

29 And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? and when they enquired and asked, they said Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.

30 Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that *was* by it.

To what an awful length of apostacy must Israel have been arrived, to condemn openly and without shame, one whose offence was zeal for Jehovah's honour, and a detestation of the worship of a dunghill deity.

31 And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst *it is yet* morning; if he *be* a god, let him plead for himself, because *one* hath cast down his altar.

Whether from fatherly affection, or from an higher principle of grace in the heart, this conduct of *Joash* sprung, I do not determine. But no doubt, the Lord over-ruled his mind in favor of his son.

32 Therefore on that day he called him Jerub-

baal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

*Jerub-baal*, that is, let Baal plead.

33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.

The year of deliverance to Israel was come, and therefore the Lord inclined the hearts of their enemies to gather together. See chap. iv. 6, 7. Micah iv. 12, 13.

34 But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abi-ezer was gathered after him.

I beg the Reader to take notice of the expression, that *the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Gideon*. Yes! it is that holy and eternal God, who worketh by his instruments through all the world of Providence and grace. Reader! be very earnest in your searchings, whether *you* are under his blessed influence. Ephes. iv. 7. 1 Cor. xii. 1—11. Zech. iv. 6.

35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

Though clothed and armed with the Spirit of the Lord, yet, as the Lord is graciously pleased to work with human instruments, Gideon calls in the Lord's people to his aid. And are we not taught to do the same by prayer? See Paul's manner on this subject, Heb. xiii. 18, &c.

36 And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,

37 Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and *it be dry* upon all the earth *beside*, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

38 And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the due out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.

39 And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this

once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.

40 And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

It is probable that those requests of Gideon were more for the confirmation of the faith of his companions, than for his own; similar to those questions which John the Baptist sent to Jesus. For they are proposed with such humbleness of soul, that they do not carry with them those marks of doubt that otherwise might be expected. Matt. xi. 2, 3, compared with John i. 29—34. Reader! do not overlook the gracious condescension of our most gracious and indulgent God, either way, and in any direction, as shall best satisfy the doubts and scruples of his people; by a dry fleece, or a moist fleece, the Lord will answer the prayers of his people. That is a very precious scripture to this purpose, Isaiah xlv. 11.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! let you and I pause over this chapter, and in the view of Israel's repeated departures from the Lord God of their mercies, behold the picture of our own hearts. How often, how very often, hath our adorable Redeemer saved us from our enemies, and yet how prone are we to forget the gracious hand, that hath wrought our salvation? And while we view our unworthiness, let the reflection lead us to contemplate renewed mercies. Doth not God send his messengers, like the Prophet, to remonstrate with us? Are not his visitations, either in the common Providences of life, in sickness, trouble, persecution, and the like, voices like the Prophet's of solemn expostulation? And when these messengers of correction and reproof are accompanied with his grace, and put a cry in our heart, under a sense of sin, and the prayer of earnestness for deliverance, doth not Jesus fly to our aid, and like his type, the Gideon here spoken of, come forth to our rescue? Oh! thou adored Lord our Righteousness! how precious is it to my soul, to see thy renewed goings forth for me in all the redemption of thy mercy! Dearest Jesus! grant me, from such repeated testimonies of thy love, such unalterable assurance of my interest in thee, that I may neither seek the moistened nor the dry fleece, to tell me that thou art a faithful God. Oh! for grace amidst all the departures and backslidings of my unworthy heart! Oh, for grace to believe stedfastly the record which God hath given of his dear Son.

## CHAP. VII.

### CONTENTS.

*The former Chapter was introductory to what is contained in this. Gideon was called in that to the Lord's service. And in this we find him entered upon it. We have here the Lord's directions concerning*

who *should accompany him to the field of battle against Midian; how he should be sure of victory; how the Lord leads him by stealth to the camp of Midian, by way of strengthening his faith: and the event of the battle, in the Lord's delivering Midian into his hand.*

**T**HEN Jerubbaal, who *is* Gideon, and all the people that *were* with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

We had in the preceding Chapter, the reason assigned for the change of Gideon's name. The change of names is common upon remarkable occasions. As Saul, after his conversion to the gospel, is called Paul. Jacob's name changed to Israel. Abram to Abraham. Hence there is a vast propriety in it. And indeed, it is one of the special promises to the church, that she should be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord should name. Isaiah lxii. 2. And Jesus hath sweetly promised to new name his people, as a token of his favor. Rev. iii. 12. Oh! to be of that happy number!

2 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that *are* with thee *are* too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

Observe how graciously the Lord follows up the *first* tokens of his grace with the after actings of his favor. But I would have the Reader more particularly remark how the Lord deals with his people in the trials of their faith; even by a method which proves the reverse of human policy. While Midian was so numerous, who would have thought of lessening an army against them. But Reader! look at this scripture spiritually, and see if the same direction be not held forth to every warrior in the holy army of Jesus. Faith sends every thing back but Jesus. All the success of the believer is in him, and in the power of his strength. "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb," is the motto of all the holy army in heaven. Rev. xii. 11.

4 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people *are* yet *too* many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be,

*that* of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of *whomsoever* I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

The Reader will do well, in reading this scripture, to meditate what he may suppose passed in the mind of Gideon, when, out of thirty-two thousand, ten thousand only remained. And yet even of those ten thousand, the Lord declared them to be too many. Oh! it is sweet, when faith is enabled to see all in God's Christ, and nothing of human policy, or human strength mingled with it. The prophet felt this, I am persuaded, when he caused the sacrifice which was to be consumed with fire, to be first deeply drenched in water. And so did Paul, when he had learned to glory in his infirmities, that there might be more scope for the display of Jesus's strength. See 1 Kings xviii. 33—38. 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

6 And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

7 And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

What a strange process, according to human ideas, was this of the Lord's, for pointing out to Gideon the army by which the Lord would conquer Midian. But Reader! turn your thoughts to a yet more astonishing process, when, by the cross of Jesus, the crown of salvation is obtained for his people. And still going on in the wonder-working plan of mercy, when by the foolishness of preaching, and the poverty of instruments, in a few dull and unlearned fishermen of Galilee, the Lord triumphs over all the wisdom of men. 1 Cor. i. 21—29.

8 So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all *the rest of* Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

This reminds us of the walls of Jericho, and the Holy Ghost hath caused to be recorded, that the victory was on one and the same account, and both by faith. See Heb. xi. 30, 32, 33.

9 ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.

10 But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host:

11 And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterwards shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that *were* in the host.

12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.

13 And when Gideon was come, behold, *there was* a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.

14 And his fellow answered and said, This *is* nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: *for* into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.

15 And it was *so*, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

Observe, the gracious condescension of God, thus to furnish out means for the strengthening of Gideon's faith. Though the Lord Jesus is both the author and finisher of our faith, and all the faith his people have is of his own gracious giving; yet doth he mercifully arrange and order things for the strengthening and confirming that faith, which he

himself hath planted in their hearts. Observe, how every event of this visit to the camp corresponded, as if to convince Gideon that all was of the Lord. The dream of one of the soldiers of Midian, and the interpretation of it by another, to say nothing of the safety of Gideon and his servants in going down unnoticed amidst this great host of foes; every thing served to bring conviction to the mind of Gideon of the Almightyness of the Lord, and how sure he was of victory. Hence the impulse of worship which burst from his mind. Oh! how precious is it to trace the Lord's hand in all the Lord's ways, and to know ourselves; and all that concerns us, to be under his government and direction. Reader! the issue of this battle with the foes of thy salvation, though numerous as grasshoppers, is not doubtful, if so be thou fightest in Jesus's name, and in Jesus's strength. Remember his own sweet words, and in all skirmishes wear them on thine heart. John xvi. 33.

16 And he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be *that*, as I do, so shall ye do.

18 When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that *are* with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, *The sword of the LORD*, and of Gideon.

As the Holy Ghost, in his own comment on this battle, (Heb. xi. 32,) hath pronounced it to be a battle of faith, we have his authority to mark the prominent features of it, agreeable to this account. And hence I do not think the subject at all overstrained, if we behold in it somewhat strikingly typical of the glorious battle fought by the Lord Jesus and his little army, over all the host of enemies which opposed our salvation. Was not the sword of our Jesus the sword of Jehovah, and of the man Christ Jesus? In his sacred person do we not behold both God and man? And, as in the army of Gideon there was neither sword nor spear, so in the army of our Jesus the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. 2 Cor. x. 4.

19 So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands.

The midnight hour is what is particularly spoken of, as a season of terror. Matt. xxv. 6.

20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal*: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

Nothing can be more evident than that the battle was the Lord's; for the army of Israel did nothing but alarm, make a great noise, and look on. *Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.* Exod. xiv. 13, 14.

22 And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host; and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, *and* to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.

The Reader should particularly remark the expression, *The Lord set every man's sword against his fellow.* The terrors of the mind make the wicked flee, when no man pursueth. And thus the Lord's promises are fulfilled. For how otherwise should one of God's people chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them? Deut. xxxii. 30.

23 And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.

24 ¶ And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan.

Though the Lord would not suffer victory to be wrought by more than three hundred, yet all Israel shall be called to the spoil. And thus, when Jesus accomplished salvation for his church and people, the whole of his train are invited to the feast of joy. See Rev. xix. 11—18.

25 And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon



the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

The church in after ages records God's mercies to Israel, respecting those princes; and prays that the like vengeance may be taken of all God's foes. Psalm lxxxiii. 11. The names of those princes, *Oreb* and *Zeeb*, were significant of the furiousness of their nature, signifying the raven and the wolf. And it is probable that the spots where they were taken, were made memorable to Israel in after ages.

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### REFLECTIONS.

It is profitable to remark, how the Lord is graciously pleased to work by slender means for his people's deliverance. *Not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.* In these precious memorandums of the church's history, may my soul learn how infinite the resources in the salvation of Jesus. Trumpets, and earthen pitchers, are effectual weapons when the Lord commissions them to conquest.

But oh! thou adored Redeemer! may I never lose sight of thy victory over death, hell, and the grave, when contemplating the gracious consequences of it in the triumphs of thy people. It is thine everlasting love, thy grace, thy righteousness, which hath laid the foundation of all thy people's deliverances, in every period of thy church. All the after-actings, in all the eventful circumstances which mark the church's history, are but the result of that love and mercy wherewith thou lovedest thy people before the earth was formed, and when thy delights were with the sons of men. Sweet and precious Jesus! how infinitely doth it enhance every blessing, and tend to endear every mercy, thus to trace it to its fountain head, in thee and in thy love to our nature! Oh! for grace in lively exercise, thus to live upon and walk with thee, my ever dear and beloved Saviour! May all my goings forth be in thee, and thy strength, the sword of Jehovah Jesus! And may all my victories be like those of the armies of heaven, through the blood of the Lamb. Even now, in the same faith as Gideon, in the assurance that the issue is not doubtful, may I send back all the strength which might appear ever so promising, and begin that song, as if the war was ended, which was heard in heaven, and which, ere long, I hope to sing in glory; *Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*

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## CHAP. VIII.

### CONTENTS.

*This Chapter is but a continuation of the history of the battle, and success of Gideon, related in the former. It forms indeed the sequel of Gideon's life. The consequence of his victory excited the displeasure of the Ephramites, because he called them not to the battle. Gideon*

*softens their displeasure by his mild answer. Some other events are related which took place after this victory. Gideon declined the government of Israel, but by his prudent conduct preserved, under the Lord, peace to Israel forty years, and died full of honor. These are the principal things recorded in this Chapter.*

**A**ND the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? and they did chide with him sharply.

What cause so good, or what conduct so unexceptionable, but will meet with envy, and the baleful effects of our corrupt passions. But Reader! was not this displeasure of the men of Ephraim principally against God, by whose order Gideon had done what he had done? See the fruits of the same unrenewed spirit in the age before. Numb. xvi. 11.

2 And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? *Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?*

3 God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

How gracious the mind of Gideon, in turning away wrath by gentleness. But observe, how Gideon points to the hand of God in all this business. See a sweet instance in the patriarch Joseph to the same effect. Gen xlv. 7, 8.

4 ¶ And Gideon came to Jordan, *and* passed over, he, and the three hundred men that *were* with him, faint, yet pursuing *them*.

Reader! remark the state of Gideon's little army; *faint, yet pursuing*. Is not this the exact representation of all the army of Jesus? Who more faint than the harrassed soldier of the great Captain of our salvation? Who gives over less than he who holds on, and holds out, and is faithful unto death, that no man may take his crown? Rev. iii. 11.

5 And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they *be* faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.

6 And the princes of Succoth said, *Are the*

hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?

7 And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.

8 And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him.

9 And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand *men*, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

11 And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jugbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure.

12 And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host,

13 And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun *was up*,

14 And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, *even* threescore and seventeen men.

15 And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men *that are weary*?

16 And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.

17 And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

The men of *Succoth*, and of *Penuel*, were Israelites by descent, but sadly degenerated from the spirit of Israel. The Reader will recollect, however, that these things happened during the time of the commonwealth of Israel, when every man did according to his own corrupt desires. The Judges, which from time to time the Lord raised up among his people, served to keep alive the remembrance of the Lord, and to preserve a seed in the earth. See chap. xxi. 25.

18 Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men *were they* whom ye slew at Tabor? and they answered, As thou *art*, so *were* they; each one resembled the children of a king.

19 And he said, They *were* my brethren, *even* the sons of my mother: *as* the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.

20 And he said unto Jether his first-born, Up, *and* slay them. But the youth drew not his sword; for he feared, because he *was* yet a youth.

21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man *is*, so *is* his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks.

This event, in the death of those princes, forms a song of praise, and a subject of prayer, in the after ages of the church. See Psalm lxxxiii. 11. But let the Reader remark, in their destruction, the sure ruin of all the church's foes; for this is the great improvement to be made of this history. It was for the church's sake the Lord came forth to the slaughter of Midian, with which, like Amalek, the Lord hath declared war for ever. Exod xvii. 16.

22 Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

This request was apparently very proper, for who so suited to govern as one whom the Lord had honored. Reader! If you and I spiritualize this passage, and make application to the Lord Jesus, of the request made to Gideon and from the same cause, would it not be exceedingly pro-

per? For hath not Jesus delivered us out of the hand of our enemies? And is it not highly suitable and becoming, that he should be our King, who is, and was, the Prophet, and Priest, and Redeemer of his people? That is a sweet scripture to this purpose, Isa. xxxiii. 22.

23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.

By Gideon's answer, it evidently appears, that there was a spirit of idolatry in Israel: they desired, like the nations around, a king, thereby denying the government of God. If you consult these scriptures, they will serve to throw a light upon the subject: 1 Sam. viii. 4—7. and 1 Sam. xii. 1 to 25.

24 And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites.)

25 And they answered, We will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.

26 And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that *were* about their camels' necks.

27 And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even* in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.

Whatever were the views of Gideon in this ephod, is not easily determined. Aaron had fallen into a similar transgression, in the time the church was in the wilderness. Alas! what are the best of men for a moment, if not upheld by grace? Exod. xxxii. 1—4.

28 Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

There is somewhat very remarkable in the agreement, between the times of the several periods in which the Lord gave rest to his people from their enemies, *Forty years*. Moses's life was divided into three *forties*. The church was in a wilderness-state forty years. And this is spoken of by the Lord himself, as a period in which his patience was ex-

exercised. Psalm xcv. 10. *Othniel*, *Barak* and *Gideon*, each governed *forty* years. The prophet *Ezekiel* was commissioned in after ages to tell the church somewhat himself, as typical of these things. Ezek. iv. 6.

29 And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.

The retired state of *Gideon*, after the Lord had blessed Israel through his instrumentality, may serve to teach the believer the humbleness of mind becoming the Lord's servants. It is sweet, when we are enabled through grace to minister to God's glory in public; and equally so, when we are enabled to enjoy the Lord ourselves in private. Matt. xiv. 23. That is a very precious precept, and brings its reward with it. Psm. iv. 4.

30 And *Gideon* had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

31 And his concubine that *was* in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called *Abimelech*.

Although from the infirmities and corruptions of our fallen nature, many of the early followers of the Lord, had more than one wife, yet, the Holy Ghost hath pointed out both the sin and folly of it; for, in every instance, we are taught what a trouble it produced in families; witness Abraham's household. Gen. xvi. 2—5. Gen. xxi. 9, 10, 11. But, that those indulgencies sprung out of the corruption of our poor fallen nature, is evident from what our blessed Lord hath said upon it. See Matt. xix. 3—8. *Gideon* seems to have had such partiality to this son of the concubine, as Abraham had to *Ishmael*: for the name *Abimelech*, signifies my father a king. How opposite, in many instances, are the feelings of nature to those of grace. Gen. xvii. 18.

32 And *Gideon* the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the *Abi-czrites*.

A good old age, in scripture language, is, I apprehend, a life of grace. To this same purport is that very precious word, Isaiah lxx. 20.

33 ¶ And it came to pass, as soon as *Gideon* was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god.

What an awful representation do the Scriptures of God afford, of the total depravity and corruption of the heart. In all ages it breaks out. Lord, what is man? *Baal-berith*, in the original, signifies, *the Lord of a Covenant*; as if Israel had covenanted with an idol to their ruin,

34 And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them

out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:

35 Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *namely*, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.

Observe how they forgot God, and how should they be grateful to man! How beautifully doth the Psalmist introduce to view, the wonderful goodness of God, when from the very sins of his people, the Lord takes occasion to display the riches of his grace. Psm. cvi. throughout, but particularly from verse 34, to the end.

### REFLECTIONS.

My soul! pause over the review of this chapter. Call to mind the wonderful mercies shewn to Israel, as related in the former chapter, and then behold the issue of divine deliverances, in the shameful departure of Israel to idolatry. My soul! art thou not astonished at the view of such perfidy? Couldst thou have believed, that there dwelt in the human heart, such vileness and corruption?

When, my soul, thou hast duly contemplated the church of God of old, look at the church of Jesus now. *What*, (saith the apostle), *are we better than they?* No, in no wise; for we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. Yes! my soul, thou art in the same condemnation by nature, and in heart and mind, prone to depart from God. Oh! precious Jesus! how dear and invaluable is thy salvation! how great that efficacy of thy blood and righteousness which pleads for the pardon of thy people. Oh, for grace to take shelter under both, from a conscious sense of my utterly ruined and undone state without it! Be thou my refuge all the day, and the justifying righteousness of my soul for evermore, for thou alone art *the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof*.

## CHAP. IX

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter prosecutes the history of Israel, after the death of Gideon. Abimelech, the natural son of Gideon, usurps the government; slays all his brethren, except the youngest, who hid himself from him. His reign, did not, however, terminate according to his wishes, for his evil conduct produced at length his own ruin. These are the contents of this chapter.*

AND Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying,

2 Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men

of Shechem, Whether *is* better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, *which are* threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that *I am* your bone and your flesh.

Observe how by iniquity, the plan is laid for obtaining the government. Here is no lawful right, no just claim, no call of God; and at the same time it is in direct opposition to his father's own promise. See chap. viii. 23.

3 And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, *He is* our brother.

4 And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him.

Take notice, how the scheme was carried on. It began in man's ambition, unauthorized by God, and was kept up by bribes from an idol. Thus laid in sin; what can the end be but vanity and vexation of spirit? *The wages of sin is death.*

5 And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, *being* threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that *was* in Shechem.

See how the dreadful pursuit is marked. It is all written in blood. And to such a wretched state is Israel at this time, as a nation, reduced; that instead of punishing, according to God's righteous law, the murderer, he is advanced with one voice to the throne. Oh, gracious God! how infinitely to be prized, in this view of the picture of the human heart, is thy preventing and restraining grace.

7 ¶ And when they told *it* to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.



The Lord, by his providence, had <sup>\*</sup>saved *Jotham*, from the general massacre of his brethren, and no doubt, the same gracious God, which had saved him from destruction, led him to make the declaration to the Shechemites, for there was much of a prophetic spirit in what he spake.

8 The trees went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.

9 But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

10 And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

11 But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?

12 Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

13 And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

14 Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

15 And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then* come *and* put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

It was a very favourite way in the Eastern world, to deliver weighty subjects by parable. And hence, in accommodation to this general mode of instruction, our adorable Redeemer chiefly delivered his precious discourses, under the cover of similitudes; so much so indeed, that at one time without a parable Jesus did not speak unto them. See Matt. xiii. 34. The figure of the tree chusing a king, and the nobler ones declining the station, while the bramble hastily caught at it, was plainly intended to shew how Gideon had, modestly for himself and his lawful sons, declined this honour! while his illegitimate son, like a worthless bramble, seized it on the first offer. Nothing, in a figurative way, could have been more happily chosen, to point out the object Jotham had in view.

16 Now therefore, if ye have done truly and

sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands :

17 (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian :

18 And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he *is* your brother) ;

19 If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, *then* rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you :

20 But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo ; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.

Nothing can be more evident, from the sequel of Abimelech's history, and which this chapter relates, than that there was a great deal of a prophetic spirit in this declaration of Jotham. The mutual destruction of Abimelech and the Shechemites, set forth this very strikingly.

21 And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

It was prudent to hasten away, when he had delivered his message in such faithfulness. How few are there that can be found faithful to God and souls !

22 ¶ When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel,

Observe, it is not said that Abimelech governed Israel for their good, or that he was a blessing to the people, but that he reigned so long, perhaps in his own enjoyments.

23 Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem ; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech :

Observe, when the triumphs of the wicked begin to draw to an end,

how we are taught to mark the Lord's hand in it. An evil spirit sowed dissention among them: but it was the Lord which sent this evil spirit. The Lord never wants instruments to accomplish the purposes of his own righteous will. It is always profitable to eye the hand of God, in every providence both of mercy and judgment. None but God's people, however, can sing of both, and none but them can sing that song *to the Lord*. Psalm ci. 1.

24 That the cruelty *done* to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren:

25 And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech.

26 And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him.

27 And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode *the grapes*, and made merry, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech.

28 And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who *is* Abimelech, and who *is* Shechem, that we should serve him? *is not he* the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him?

29 And would to God this people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out.

30 And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled.

31 And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren be come to Shechem; and, behold, they fortify the city against thee.

32 Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that *is* with thee, and lie in wait in the field :

33 And it shall be, *that* in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city : and, behold, *when* he and the people that *is* with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion.

34 And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that *were* with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies.

35 And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city : and Abimelech rose up, and the people that *were* with him, from lying in wait.

36 And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as *if they were* men.

37 And Gaal spake again and said, See there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Menenim.

38 Then said Zebul unto him, Where *is* now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who *is* Abimelech, that we should serve him ? *is* not this the people that thou hast despised ? go out, I pray now, and fight with them.

39 And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech.

40 And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown *and* wounded, *even* unto the entering of the gate.

41 And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah : and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem.

42 And it came to pass on the morrow, that

the people went out into the field ; and they told Abimelech.

43 And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and looked, and, behold, the people *were* come forth out of the city : and he rose up against them, and smote them.

44 And Abimelech, and the company that *was* with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city : and the two *other* companies ran upon all *the people* that *were* in the fields, and slew them.

45 And Abimelech fought against the city all that day ; and he took the city, and slew the people that *was* therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt.

46 And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard *that*, they entered into an hold of the house of the god Berith.

47 And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.

48 And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that *were* with him ; and Abimelech took an ax in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid *it* on his shoulder, and said unto the people that *were* with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, *and* do as I *have done*.

49 And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put *them* to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them ; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

50 Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it.

51 But there was a strong tower within the city,

and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut *it* to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower.

52 And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire.

53 And a certain woman cast a piece of a milstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his scull.

54 Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, *A* woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

55 And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place.

56 ¶ Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren :

57 And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads ; and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

One general observation runs through the whole of this history, and meets the Reader in every part of it: namely, that God's judgments, sooner or later, overtake the sinner. The Shechemites are first punished by the apparent victory of Abimelech, but this victory only becomes the prelude to the death of Abimelech: so that both fall by the just judgment of Almighty God. So true and final is that solemn sentence of God: *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed ; for in the image of God made he man.* Gen. ix. 6.

### REFLECTIONS.

WHILE I beg the Reader to reflect with me on the sad account of human sin and transgression which this chapter affords, I desire him no less to remark, how various the ways the Lord is pleased to adopt, to punish the sins of his people. Sometimes by the scourge of the enemy, and sometimes by the baseness of false friends. Oh! my God, give me to behold, and with humble thankfulness to contemplate, thy mercy in thus adopting any, and every means, thy grace and wisdom see most suited to the end, to call home our rebellious hearts, when at any time, from a fulness of blessings, we depart from thee. Yes, blessed God!

do thou mercifully appoint chastisements, of whatever kind, or nature, or degree, the case requires, so that my wandering soul is again allured and brought back to thy fold; and Jesus becomes increasingly precious, from a stronger conviction in my past rebellion, of my need of him. Raise up, gracious Lord, an holy conflict, in the struggles of my poor fallen nature, until, like the men of *Shechem*, and *Abimelech*, they mutually destroy one another, so that every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Root out all the brambles and thorns which would propose shelter to my sins; and do thou, blessed Jesus, as the cedar of Lebanon, or the olive tree of *Engedi*, and the vine of Zion, cover me with thy rich branches, and give me to sit under *thy shadow with great delight, that thy fruit may be sweet to my taste.*

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## CHAP. X.

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter relates a pleasant, but short interval to the wars of Israel, under the peaceable government of two of its Judges; Tola, the son of Puah, and Jair a Gileadite. A renewal of Israel's transgression succeeds; and, in consequence, a renewal of troubles. God's anger and visitation: Israel's sorrow and humiliation; these are enumerated in this chapter.*

**A**ND after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim.

2 And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir.

There is somewhat significant in the name of *Tola*; it signifies in the original, a worm. Perhaps it was descriptive of the humility of this man's mind, for, though he governed Israel twenty-three years, yet we hear nothing ostentatious of him. Reader! doth it not serve, in the view of this man's name, to remind thee of him, who in the unequalled humility of his soul, called himself the worm. Psm. xxii. 6. And was it not to him, as our great surety and representative, Jehovah spake, in that memorable scripture, Isaiah xli. 14. Perhaps the Reader doth not know, that Jesus was called by way of reproach, the *Tolah*: meaning, the hanged one, after his crucifixion; and all his followers branded with being disciples of the *Tolah*: the hanged one. Precious Redeemer! in humbleness as well as glory, it behoveth thee to have the pre-eminence.

3 ¶ And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years.

4 And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead.

5 And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

There was an illustrious *Jair* before this man. Numb. xxxii. 41. Though *Jair* reigned twenty-two years, and was eminently distinguished as a father, with a numerous progeny, and provided for them nobly, yet all his history is contained in a small compass; that he was a *Gileadite*, that he had thirty sons, which rode elegantly; which possessed thirty cities, and after reigning twenty-two years, that he died. Alas! and what is the inscription of every man's tomb but like it. Oh! how precious it is, to belong to him who liveth for ever, and hath said, *Because I live, ye shall live also.* John xiv. 19.

6 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him.

Let the Reader, while he reads this sad account of the defection of Israel, call to mind the melancholy state of nature void of grace, in all ages. What a tender expostulation is that of God by the prophet, in the view of it. Jer. ii. 11, 12.

7 ¶ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.

8 And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years, all the children of Israel that *were* on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which *is* in Gilead.

9 Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed.

How close upon the heels of sin is the Lord's chastisement. But Reader, do not overlook God's love in all his judgments. Sweet is the confession of the Psalmist upon this subject, considered in his personal character. It will be well if both writer and reader in all their afflictions, can do the same. Psalm cxix. 75, &c.

10 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.



It was a gracious promise of God, that if his people under his judgments, accepted the punishment of their iniquity, God would remember his everlasting covenant. See Levit. xxvi. 40, 41, 42. Reader! do not overlook, in this promise, the salvation by Jesus. God's covenant with Abraham was typical of the everlasting covenant of redemption. See Gen. xvii. 7. How else could it be called an everlasting covenant? And what else could be implied in being a God to him and to his seed, but the blessings of Jesus, in whom all the families of the earth are alone blessed.

11 And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, *Did not I deliver you* from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, and from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines?

12 The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.

13 Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more.

14 Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.

These strong, but gracious expostulations, are all leading to repentance. They all convey, what would be justice indeed, but by grace accompanying them, they prepare for mercy. Oh! how precious is that rich, and compleat salvation, in which the Lord, in the person of our Great Representative, hath taken vengeance of our sins, while sparing in him the sinner. Hence the assurance of that blessed doctrine. Rom. iii. 26.

15 ¶ And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only we pray thee, this day.

Reader, do not overlook, in this acknowledgment of Israel, the characters of true repentance. They lie low in the dust, acknowledging God's sovereign right to do as he pleased; and while they supplicate mercy, confess that they have no pretensions to it. Certainly the Holy Ghost prepares the souls of true penitents for all the riches of Jesus' grace, in thus stripping the heart of every thing, that Jesus may be more precious.

16 And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

The expression here made use of, that the Lord's *soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*, is so very striking, that I would wish the

Reader to pause over the perusal of it. There is a similar one in the prophecy of Ezekiel, in which the Lord saith, *I am broken with their whorish heart.* Ezek. vi. 9. Was it not meant to convey to us, (for I do not presume to speak decidedly upon so solemn a passage) the *human nature* of Jesus, of whom it is said, that in all the afflictions of his people, he was afflicted. Isa lxiii. 9, 10. The God-head of Jesus is not subject to such passions. If this be the meaning of the passage, how very sweet is it thus to trace the outlines of Jesus in his love to his people, in all their circumstances.

17 Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh.

18 And the people *and* princes of Gilead said one to another, What man *is he* that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

When the Lord is about to appear for the deliverance of his people, he soon raiseth instruments for the purpose. That is a blessed scripture, for the encouragement of God's afflicted ones in all ages, when the Lord hath prepared their minds for his mercy; we may be sure that the mercy is prepared for them. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy; now will I arise, saith the Lord. Psalm xii. 5.

#### REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, my soul! over the perusal of this chapter, and behold once more a renewed instance of human corruption, and divine grace triumphing over it, in the richest display of that glorious testimony; that 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.

But chiefly my soul, remark in this chapter, what is said of his unequalled love, and tender sympathy with his people; whose soul was grieved for the misery of Israel. Yes! dearest Jesus, here I fully recognize thee! It is Jesu's soul that was grieved. It is the same, of whom it is said, that in all their affliction he was afflicted. In his love, and in his pity, he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and *vexed his Holy Spirit.* Oh! sweet and precious view of the humanity of Jesus! Sweet and precious evidence, that he hath indeed taken our nature upon him! Sweet and precious assurance of his being the same Jesus, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever: when, in an age so long before his incarnation, and the eternal purposes of salvation came to be fulfilled, Jesus' soul participated in the miseries of his people. And shall not my soul find a growing confidence in this unequalled view of his love? Shall I not rest assured, that if my adored Redeemer took a part, and so decided a part

in the sorrows of his people, before redemption-work was finished; will he not now feel an interest, and concern in all that relates to them? Did the Son of God indeed come down from Heaven; did he leave the bosom of the Father, and tabernacle in substance of our flesh, on purpose to accomplish salvation; and was his soul grieved for those miseries he came to do away; and will he now relax in his regard, and overlook the miseries of his Israel, when he is exalted at the right hand of the Father, and all power is His in heaven and earth? Will not Jesus, of whom it is said, having loved his own which are in the world, he loveth them unto the end; will he not commiserate our distresses, soften their asperity, and overrule them to his own glory, and his people's welfare? Oh! thou dear Redeemer! convinced as my soul is, that amidst all the hallelujah's of the blessed, the care of thy church below, attracts thy unceasing concern; nor can all the joys of heaven cause thee to remit one moment thy participating in all the circumstances of the humblest and poorest of thy tried family: may my soul feel the Spirit's constraining influence in drawing me nearer to the view, and to the enjoyment of thee my God and Saviour; till from conducting me through all troubles, and sympathizing with me in all needful afflictions, thou shalt bring me safe to that blessed place, where as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, thou feedest thy redeemed, leadest them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

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## CHAP. XI.

### CONTENTS.

*The history of the Judges during the commonwealth of Israel, and their government is continued. In this chapter we have the relation of Jephthah's administration. His birth, valor, contest with Ammon in the deliverance of Israel, victory, and rash vow, and the event of it, on the person of his daughter: these form the contents of this chapter.*

**N**OW Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he *was* the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.

2 And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou *art* the son of a strange woman.

It was remarked in the preceding chapter, that the men of Gilead were consulting who to appoint as their leader, to go out with them to battle against the Ammonites. The Lord was about to appear for their deliverance. And when the Lord comes forth for this purpose, he never needs an instrument in order to accomplish his gracious designs. The distinction that is here made between the children of lawful wedlock, and those sprung from unlawful connections, is uniformly marked through the bible. There is indeed more in it, in a spiritual sense, than is gene-

rally considered. The married state is expressly said to be a figure of the union between Christ and his church. So the apostle explains it: Ephes. v. 24—32. But notwithstanding all this, we find instances in scripture, in which the Lord is pleased to shew that publicans and harlots are not disqualified for participating in the mercies of Jesus. Perhaps a more illustrious instance cannot be found than in that of *Rahab* the harlot. And was not this a type of the call of the Gentiles, to whom the Lord was not married as to Israel? Compare Joshua ii. 1—14. with James ii. 25. Heb. xi. 31.

3 Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.

The gathering of vain men unto Jephthah, is not unsimilar to David's army, when he became their captain, when every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became their captain. See 1 Sam. xxii. 2. But in all this, do I not see Jesus pictured out as the real David, and the captain of his people? Never, dearest Lord, should I have gathered with others unto thee, nor have sought to have thee to reign over me, if I had not been in soul distress, by reason of sin; in a state of insolvency by reason of debt to the law of God, and miserably discontented in the claims of a guilty conscience, until I found ease under thy precious banner, as the captain of my salvation.

4 And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel.

5 And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob:

6 And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.

Reader! spiritualize this passage, and see if the cry of the soul to Jesus in the hour of extremity is not similar. Before the soul is brought to this, we are like Gilead, without an head. But when ruin is before us, like the disciples on the lake, the language then is, *Lord! save or we perish.* Matt. viii. 25.

7 And Jephthah said unto the children of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?

If the Reader connects with this view of Jephthah, the history of Joseph with his brethren, he will discover some similarity. But if he spiritualizeth the subject with a greater than Joseph, and recollects how the Lord Jesus was despised of his brethren, of whom it is said, that neither did they believe on him, he will find a greater beauty still. John vii. 3—5.

8 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

Just so the sinner in his approaches unto Jesus, when once convinced that there is salvation in no other. Oh! it is precious when once brought by the Holy Ghost, to give all the glory to Him, as our head, and to crown him Lord.

9 And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head?

10 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.

11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.

It is said of the adored Redeemer, that Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but was called of God, as was Aaron. Heb. v. 4, 5. It is beautiful, and even glorious in the contemplation of redemption-work, that in all Jesus did and accomplished, the Father's gracious hand is seen joined with the Savior's work in the plan of mercy. My Father, saith Jesus, worketh hitherto, and I work. John v. 17. I cannot close the perusal of this account of Jephthah's uttering all his words before the Lord, without reminding the Reader of that most sublime view of the Son of God, lifting up his eyes to heaven, just as he was about to enter on his last act, in the finishing redemption, and saying; Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee, &c. John xvii. 1—4.

12 And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land?

13 And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan, now therefore restore those *lands* again peaceably.

14 And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon :

15 And said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon :

16 But when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness unto the Red sea, and came to Kadesh ;

17 Then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land : but the king of Edom would not hearken *thereto*. And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab : but he would not *consent* : and Israel abode in Kadesh.

18 Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab : for Arnon *was* the border of Moab.

19 And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon ; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land into my place.

20 But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast : but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

21 And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them : so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country.

22 And they possessed all the coast of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan.

23 So now the LORD God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it ?

24 Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? so whomsoever the LORD our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess.

25 And now *art* thou any thing better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them,

26 While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Arøer and her towns, and in all the cities that *be* along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why therefore did ye not recover *them* within that time?

27 Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the LORD the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.

28 Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

I include the whole of the treaty, which passed between Jephthah, and the leader of the Ammonites, in one point of view, not only for the sake of shortness, but also for the sake of connection. In the perusal of this passage, I would desire the Reader to keep in remembrance the spiritual state of God's church, while he reads the historical events of God's people. And in this sense, I would call upon him to look back, and recollect how Moses was commanded to go in unto Pharaoh, and demand the release of God's people, before that the Lord brought them out. And was not Ammon's oppression of Israel similar? Was it not the church of Jesus, Satan endeavoured to ruin and destroy? Let my people go, that they may serve me, was the demand of God? Was not our nature God's right by creation, before that Satan ruined that nature by the fall? And if Ammon pleaded long possession of those territories, were not these lands the Lord's gift to his people before? Reader! If Satan hath had long possession of our poor humbled nature, do not forget you are the Lord's prior possession, both by creation and by redemption. For Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Rev. xiii. 8.

29 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over *unto* the children of Ammon.

I pray the Reader to remark Jephthah's anointing. It was the same spirit which came upon Jephthah, which descended upon the Lord Jesus, only with this difference, on Jephthah, according to the measure of the gift of Christ; upon the Lord Jesus without measure. But it is delightful to contemplate, that the anointing and qualifying of the Lord Jesus and his church is one and the same. All these worketh that one, and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. See Ephes. iv. 7. John iii. 34. 1 Cor. xii. 11.

30 ¶ And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

31 Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.

Surely the vow of Jephthah proceeded from the want of faith; else why did he doubt, why did he say if the Lord would deliver Ammon into his hands? And Reader! make an observation of it in your own experience whenever faith fails, the ill effects of it are near at hand. A little faith, or lively exercise, will carry a believer through great difficulties. But if the Lord for the trial of our grace, and to let us see what mere feathers we are in the wind of temptation, if the Lord for a moment withdraws the arm of his strength, by which our faith is upheld; depend upon it, in that moment we fall. Hence our dear Lord, in the exercise of his mercy when upon earth, so much praised the evidences of faith in his people, as if he seemed to suspend these mercies on this very principle. Believest thou that I am able to do this? According to your faith, so be it done unto you. Matt. ix. 28, 29.

32 So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands.

33 And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minneth, *even* twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

Observe who it was that made Jephthah victorious. Yes! As in heaven so on earth, the armies of God overcame by the blood of the Lamb. It is always delightful to trace from whence our mercies flow; because through grace all the praise will then return to the right owner. Rev. xii. 11.

34 ¶ And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to



meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she *was his only child*; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

35 And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.

36 And she said unto him, My father, *if* thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon.

37 And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

38 And he said, Go. And he sent her away *for* two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

39 And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her *according* to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,

40 *That* the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

Various have been the opinions of pious men, on the subject of Jephthah's vow, and the event of it. But as the Holy Ghost hath not thought proper to make the subject clear, it should seem that it is the Lord's pleasure thus to leave it somewhat obscure; perhaps for the greater exercise of pious men's faith. If, as I before remarked, this vow of Jephthah proceeded from the weakness and littleness of his faith, certainly the Lord's rebuke was manifested in the punishment which followed. If, as some think, that Jephthah did *not* offer his daughter in sacrifice; for *human* sacrifices were not allowed by the law, then perhaps her being devoted to a single state, and sent to the temple service, is in some mea-

sure explained, in her being allowed two months to bewail her virgin state, by which that great hope all Israel were so tenacious of, in giving birth to Him who as the seed of the woman, was to bruise the serpent's head, was in her case done away. And then the latter verse, which speaks of the daughters of Israel going yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah, seems corresponding with it. But on the other hand, if her father really sacrificed her, which seems the most probable of the two, (though the reluctance of Jephthah doth not much prefigure the voluntary gift of our heavenly Father, in giving up his only begotten Son for our redemption,) yet the pure and virgin state of the daughter, becomes no unapt representation of the spotless innocence of Jesus, who in the prime of life, offered himself a sacrifice for the salvation of his people. But I presume not to decide the point. Certain it is, that the Holy Ghost hath left the subject in obscurity. And therefore it becomes us to read it with humble waiting for his divine instruction. If the Reader recollects the promise of Jesus concerning the Spirit's teaching, and places himself under this heavenly teacher, not only in this, but in every other intricate passage, as far as is necessary to be understood, the Holy Ghost will guide him unto all truth.. John xvi. 13.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! ponder over this chapter, and remark with me, how very striking the marks of distinguishing grace! While all the sons of Gilead, in lawful descent, were passed by; Jephthah, the son of an harlot, is chosen to be the servant of the Lord to his people! From hence let you and I learn never to overrate any thing, from the mere outward and adventitious circumstances of birth, or human distinction. Not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are. And oh! that the God of all grace, may give us both grace, that we may know by heart-felt experience, the sweetness and preciousness of being the distinguished object of so much mercy, which may be a never-failing source of comfort here, and of everlasting happiness hereafter.

But while we behold in Jephthah, this distinguishing mark of the divine favour, let the Reader learn in his instance, how to appreciate the grace of God, while beholding the little deserts of men. Reader! it is delightful, indeed it is, to observe in the history of all men, even the best of men (for this is the uniform character of the whole race) that God's mercies, (even the richest of mercies, Jesus himself) have never been bestowed because we have merited them. No, blessed God! all are founded in thine everlasting love; they originate in thine own free and sovereign mercy. Thou art the first cause; and thou art the final end. For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Reader! let us pass over all other considerations, all other subjects, and in the view of Jesus, the first, best, and most comprehensive of all gifts, the mercy of all mercies, here rest our contemplation. And thus far imitate Jephthah's vow to say, if our God will indeed give Jesus into our arms, in our heart, and form him there by the sweet influences of his Holy Spirit, the hope of glory;

then will we give up for a burnt-offering, every other joy, and relinquish all that flesh and blood holds dear, so that Jesus be the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.

## CHAP. XII.

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter is connected with the former. It relates to us the displeasure of the men of Ephraim against Jephthah, because he called them not to the battle with Ammon; and the sad consequence of this jealousy: the death of Jephthah; the three successive judges to Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, including a period of 25 years.*

**A**ND the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire.

2 And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands.

3 And when I saw that ye delivered *me* not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: wherefore are then ye come unto me this day, to fight against me?

4 Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites *are* fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, *and* among the Manassites.

If the Reader recollects the dying benediction of the Patriarch over the two sons of Joseph, how under the spirit of prophecy Jacob put Ephraim before Manasseh, he will here trace the fulfilment of it, and therefrom discover the foundation of the jealousy between those two houses. See Gen. xlviii. 13—20. But what a melancholy event is it in human nature, to behold from the consequence of the fall the quarrels of brethren to be even greater than among strangers. A brother offended (we are told in scripture) is harder to be won than a strong city. Prov. xviii. 19. Precious Jesus! what a refreshing thought is it to my soul, that amidst all my numerous and repeated provocations, thou art not so offended. Thou art indeed *the Brother born for adversity; the friend that loveth at all times; and that sticketh closer than a brother.* Prov. xvii. 17. xviii. 24.

5 And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was *so*, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, *Art* thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay;

6 Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce *it* right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

*Shibboleth* means a river. The only difference between this and *Sibboleth*, arose from spelling the former with the Hebrew letter *Shin*, and the latter with *Samech*. But what is the spiritual illustration of the passage to mark the Shibboleth from the Sibboleth? Is it not, according to what our adored Redeemer taught when he said, 'by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.' Matt. xii. 37. The language of the lips will correspond to the feelings of the heart. If Jesus be in the heart, depend upon it, his sweet name will be as honeycomb dropping from the lips. But if Christ be not formed in the heart the hope of glory, the *Sibboleth* of the conversation will betray the man, as Peter was discovered in the high priest's palace. Matt. xxvi. 73.

7 ¶ And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in *one of* the cities of Gilead.

How quick in succession the departure of men! It may be said of all God's servants, as it is of David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, he fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption. But Reader! what a precious addition to this remark doth the Holy Ghost make concerning our Jesus? He whom God raised again saw no corruption. Pray read the passage, and the two beautiful verses which follow, Acts xiii. 36—39.

8 And after him Ibzan of Beth-lehem judged Israel.

9 And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, *whom* he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.

10 Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Beth-lehem.

11 And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years.

12 And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.

13 And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel.

14 And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years.

15 And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites.

I include the whole of these verses, and of the reign of three judges, comprizing a period of twenty-five years, within the compass of one view, not only for the sake of brevity, but because the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to have nothing more recorded of those men but that they lived, and reigned, and provided for themselves and families, and then died and were buried. Alas! is there nothing to be remarked of them, in their zeal for God? Do their histories furnish no monuments of having promoted the divine glory? Then have we nothing to record to their honour? *Ibzan* was born in Bethlehem. This may, as it ought to do, remind us of Jesus, being the memorable spot of Christ's birth and incarnation. So far therefore, the history of this judge of Israel furnisheth out subject for meditation. But what a deplorable state was Israel, as a people, now reduced to, that in the history of all these judges comprizing a period of so many years, we hear nothing of Israel's altars, high priests, and offerings! What the prophet was commissioned to tell the church at another period, seems applicable also to this. Israel shall abide many days without sacrifice, and without ephod, and teraphim. But afterwards they shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king. Hosea iii. 4, 5. Precious promise then, and even before that period, though leading toward it, in the part of history we are now upon. For all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea, and amen. And our glorious David compriseth in himself all the promises of the Bible. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Gen. iii. 15. compared with Gal. iii. 16. and Luke i. 72. 2 Cor. i. 20.

### REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! in all the contentions and animosities of life, and especially among brethren, never lose sight of Him, and his unequalled love, who passeth by the repeated provocations of thy sinful nature, and in return for thy manifold instances of ingratitude, pours himself, and his fulness of mercies into thy bosom. Precious Jesus! thou hast indeed endured the contradiction of sinners against thyself, and on the cross remembered our poor blind nature, when in that sweet prayer, thou didst call upon the Father to forgive the sins of ignorance, for they knew not what they did. Wilt thou be pleased, dearest Lord, to be to me all I need. Do thou fill up all relations: make up the want of every tie of natural affinities, and so influence my soul by the constraining graces of

thine Holy Spirit, that the language of my heart may be the true *Shibboleth* of thy gospel; so as never to betray thy interest, nor give the enemy cause to blaspheme; but that thy name, thy person, thy righteousness, thy salvation, may be as ointment poured forth, for the fragrantcy of it, and my mouth may daily speak of it among the people, for I know no end thereof.

## CHAP. XIII.

### CONTENTS.

*This chapter commenceth with another sad account of Israel's transgression, and the consequent punishment from the Lord. We have in it also, the relation of the birth of Samson, and the message of an angel concerning him. The conference between the angel and the mother of Samson in the first interview, and the renewed conversation at a second, when her husband was present. Both are circumstantially related in this chapter.*

**A**ND the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

This is but the same distressing page, varying only as circumstances required they should vary, concerning Israel's sin and the Lord's punishment. But Reader! do not overlook, for it is a sweet consoling thought: correction is a mark of love, a proof of interest, the token of a father. If I see a man chastizing a child, I instantly know that there is a relationship between them. That man I should say, without being told so, is the child's father. And do not these frequent corrections of Israel prove to me, that the Lord is Israel's father? You only have I known, (saith God) of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Amos iii. 2.

2 ¶ And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name *was* Manoah; and his wife *was* barren, and bare not.

*Dan* was one of the tribes of Israel. And this tribe lay near the Philistines' country. Jacob prophesied concerning this tribe, that Dan should judge his people. Perhaps this prophecy had its fulfilment in the person of Samson. Gen. xlix. 16.

3 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou *art* barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bare a son.

If the Reader will connect what is here said of this angel, with what is said of him in verse 18, where the angel declares his name to be *Secret*, or as it might have been translated *Wonderful*: and then will call to mind what the Holy Ghost hath said of the Lord Jesus, by his servant the prophet Isaiah, that his name should be called *Wonderful*; such views will leave the Reader but little room to doubt who this an-

gel was. See Isa. ix. 6. And if the Reader will go further, and read the 22nd verse, he will then have a further evidence. For it appears that neither Manoah nor his wife considered this visitor as any other than as a created angel, until that he ascended in the flame of the altar, and then they knew that it was God himself: and under this impression the man cried out, *We shall surely die, because we have seen God.* Had he not been convinced that this was Jehovah, he would not have so expressed himself: for it was upon the authority of God's own words which the Lord had said before to Moses, that he grounded this assurance! *Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live.* Exod. xxxiii. 20. This view of the subject will open to us most precious information to guide through all the parts of it. I pray the Reader, therefore, to preserve it in remembrance. The angel introduceth himself to the woman's notice as demanding particular attention, not only from the seeming interest he took in what concerned her, but also in intimating that he knew her barrenness. It was a calamity to any of the Israelites to be barren. *Write this man childless;* was one of God's severe judgments. Jer. xxii. 30. It is worthy observation, that as Isaac was a child of promise; so was Samson. And was he not in this, a type and figure of the promised seed? Paul found great comfort in being of the class of the children of promise. Gal. iv. 28.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bare a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

There is somewhat peculiarly interesting in the law of the *Nazarites*. The separation, or the being sanctified, and set apart to the Lord, carried with it a matter of great moment. And hence Moses appropriates a whole chapter to this one subject. And it is worthy of remark, that at the close of that chapter the blessing of Israel is subjoined, which certainly is expressive of the united blessing of Jehovah in his three-fold character of persons. See Numb. vi. throughout. See the Commentary also on that chapter. That the Lord had a peculiar eye of grace and favour to the Nazarites, is evident from the prophet, because the Lord takes to himself praise that he had raised up, of Israel's young men, to be Nazarites. See Amos ii. 11. But is there not, in all this, a striking reference to our adored Redeemer, who is uniformly distinguished as Jesus Christ of Nazareth? And were not all Nazarites types of him? Were they not intended to shew their belonging to him and to his seed, who in the first days of the gospel were in contempt called *Nazarites*? Oh! how sweet to go forth without the camp, bearing his reproach! See Heb. xiii. 13. Matt. ii. 23. Acts xxviii. 22.

6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his

countenance *was* like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he *was*, neither told he me his name:

7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean *thing*: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

An interesting information to her husband. No doubt from the nature of the prohibition, both Manoah and his wife conceived somewhat wonderful of this child; and cheerfully wished that a child, concerning whose birth so much attention was to be shewn, might be dedicated as a Nazarite to the Lord from the womb. Nothing can be more interesting, nor more devoutly to be prayed for by true believers in Jesus, than that their offspring should be early followers of the Lord as dear children. If my Reader be a parent he will outrun all that I might add upon this subject.

8 ¶ Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my LORD, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

There is somewhat very striking in the prayer of Manoah. No doubt from the woman's account in the joy she had experienced from the interview with the angel, the husband desired to be made a partaker in the same felicity. Reader! how dead and insipid would be all earthly conversation, if we were conversant with the heavenly inhabitants. Dearest Jesus! grant us the sweet visits of thy grace, and let our conversation be more in heaven; then shall we be looking for, and longing for the day of thy coming. Phil. iii. 20.

9 And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband *was* not with her.

God is a God-hearing prayer, and faithful to his promises. Before my people call is the promise, I will answer. And Jesus confirms the same, when he saith, Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Compare Isaiah lxxv. 24. with Matt. xxi. 22.

10 And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the *other* day.

It doth not appear from the relation, that the angel bid her call her husband, but it may be supposed. So did Jesus to the woman of Samaria. John iv. 16.



11 And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, *Art* thou the man that spakest unto the woman? and he said, *I am*.

12 And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and *how* shall we do unto him?

13 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.

14 She may not eat of any *thing* that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean *thing*: all that I commanded her let her observe.

Certainly in all this we behold a lively type of the ever-blessed Jesus. He was himself holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; and a Nazarite indeed, in whom was no guile. And was not the mother of Samson, like the church of old, during the long expected season of the birth of Jesus, enjoined to holiness, and to touch not the unclean thing? Ye are an holy nation, a peculiar people. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

15 ¶ And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.

Every step in this delightful narration, becomes more and more interesting. Perhaps the Reader will recollect, how in similar circumstances, Abraham tried to detain his heavenly visitor. Gen. xviii. 2—5. Reader, you and I can hardly enter into the full apprehension of the sweetness of those things. Since the Son of God finished redemption-work, and returned unto glory, such open appearances have not been vouchsafed, of divine visits. But stop—are we not still more highly favoured? Is not the Holy Ghost come down to *dwell* in the hearts of his people; and is not that gracious promise fulfilled, that if any man love our Jesus, the Father will love him, and both will come and make their abode with him? Are these things so? Do the Holy undivided Three, truly visit the souls of the faithful? Oh! then may my soul know this, feel it, and truly enjoy it, and constrain the Lord to abide with me always, even to the end of the world. Dear Jesus! I would say, be not thou as a way-faring man, that tarrieth but for a night; but do thou remember thy promise, wherein thou hast caused me to hope. John xiv. 24—26. Matt. xxviii. 20.

16 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For

Manoah knew not that he *was* an angel of the LORD.

It is not strange that *Manoah* should be unconscious who this angel was: for when our Lord Jesus Christ came in substance of our flesh, and in a more open display of his Person, when he came to his own, his own received him not. John i. 11.

17 And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?

18 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?

Jacob felt the same desire, in the interview he had with the angel. Gen xxxii. 29. Reader! what a mercy is it, to you and to me, that that name, which is now so dear to his people, is no longer secret. Now we know him in that lovely name of Jesus, a Saviour; the Lord our righteousness, and all the other precious appellations by which he comes home, revealed to our hearts: and which are as ointment poured forth. Matt. i. 21. Jer. xxiii. 6. Song i. 3. Oh! thou precious Emanuel; may I so know thy name, as to put my trust in thee. Psm. ix. 10.

19 So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered *it* upon a rock unto the LORD: and *the angel* did wonderously; and Manoah and his wife looked on.

20 For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on *it*, and fell on their faces to the ground.

What a most interesting scene this must have been! It seems as if the man and his wife did nothing but look on. Yes, our faith can go no further. To lift a tool upon the altar is to pollute it. Exod xx. 25. Jesus is both the sacrifice, the rock or altar on which the sacrifice is offered, and the High Priest to offer. Well might they look on when the Lord did things so wonderously. There could be no longer a question who this was, when he ascended in the flame of the altar. Whether fire came down from heaven, or whether the Lord caused it to issue from the rock to consume the sacrifice, it is not said; but the acceptableness of the sacrifice could not be doubted, when the wonderful angel ascended with it before God. Reader, how very precious are such views, in type and figure, we meet with occasionally in the Old Testament, of that one grand and all-sufficient offering which our Lord Jesus made by himself, under the New Dispensation? And oh! how very, very refreshing to the souls of God's people now, is the consideration, that our dear Lord, as Mediator, gives a sanctity and sweetness to all the pure offerings of our

hearts, in perfuming them with the odours of his blood and righteousness, and ascending in the flame of our devotions, which he himself, by his Holy Spirit, hath excited; and carries them, as our High Priest, before the throne! Oh! may my soul never presume to draw nigh, but under the censer of this Great High Priest! And may my soul never cease to draw nigh, now I have such an High Priest and Advocate with the Father, who is the propitiation for my sins. 1 John ii. 1, 2.

21 But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he *was* an angel of the LORD.

22 And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

23 But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these *things*, nor would as at this time have told us *such things* as these.

The effect upon the minds of those persons was as might be expected. Never will the soul lay lower, than in the moment of receiving signal mercies. It is difficult to say, which to admire most, the fear of the man, or the faith of the woman. Nothing can be more admirably expressed, than the well-grounded confidence of the woman. Surely the Lord's acceptance of an offering, must carry with it a conviction of love to the person offering? And never, at such a time as this, when there was no open vision, would the Lord have shewed them such gracious things, had he not intended mercy. Reader! do not overlook the personal instruction this view of the subject brings. If you have ever tasted that the Lord is gracious: if you have been let into the sweets of God's grace in Jesus: if in times past you have been led to view the loveliness of Jesus, and have seen a suitableness and an all-sufficiency in Him for salvation: seek for that sweet office of the Holy Ghost, I mean as the Remembrancer of Jesus, to live upon these things, when you cannot see them. Recollect, that though *your* views differ, Jesus is the same. Carry these things about with you, to help the mind in a dark and cloudy day. And learn to say, as the wife of Manoah did, *If the Lord had meant to kill, he would not have shewed such things, neither have received Christ, the great sacrifice, at your hands.*

24 ¶ And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Samson, like Shemesh, signifies a sun: probably typical of Him, who is emphatically called, the Sun of righteousness. Mal. iv. 2. And per-

haps in allusion to his great strength. For the sun is said to go forth as a giant to run his course: Psm. xix. 5. The first indications of the strength which would afterwards be manifested in his life. What a lovely and engaging view is given of our adorable Redeemer, in his human nature, when in the midst of the Jewish doctors, he astonished every one with his questions and answers, Luke ii. 46, 47. How very interesting is the dawn of early piety, and the love of God our Saviour in young minds. And what additional beauty it throws over the youthful countenance. Such most probable, was John, the youngest of all the disciples, whom it is said *Jesus loved*. John xiii. 23.

### REFLECTIONS.

CONTEMPLATE, my soul, the wonderful grace of God manifested to this humble family, amidst the general corruption of Israel; and remark from it, for thy comfort and encouragement in evil times, how the Lord watcheth over his people for good. Behold! how angels minister unto them that are the heirs of salvation. And may I not hope, may I not trust, that some celestial messenger will graciously be sent to my relief in any, and in every case, wherein my God and Father sees it needful.

But do I not see in this instance Jesus himself, the Almighty Angel, and Messenger of the Father's covenant? Surely, dearest Jesus, as the great Mediator of it, and in this light thy Father's servant, it is thou thyself which hast brought all the glorious revelations of heaven! It is thou which hast communicated all the important messages from Jehovah to men. Surely it was thou which didst converse with the Patriarchs, with thy church in the wilderness, and upon many occasions, like the present, to thy people, as if thou didst long for the period fixed on from all eternity to arrive, in which thou wouldest assume our flesh, and dwell among us. As if thy precious soul, in contemplating the glories of redemption, anticipated with joy and rapture the hour when by thy appearing in substance of our flesh, thou wouldest ransom the souls of thy people from everlasting destruction. Oh! thou Almighty Angel of the New Covenant, thou High Priest after the order of Melchisedec; thou Altar, thou Rock, and Sacrifice! do thou be all these, and infinitely more, if needful, in all my poor offerings; and do thou perform wonderfully, and give me faith to look on, till my eyes see thee ascending in the flame of thine own compleat and all-sufficient sacrifice, as an evidence that thou art all in all, and goest up with thy people's intercession in thy dear name and righteousness; and then, like Manoah and his wife, I would fall with reverence of soul and body at thy feet, as the Lord my righteousness.

But let me take one prospect more of the subject in this Chapter, and in the promised child of *Samson*, the Nazarite from the womb, behold him typified, who was not only separated from the very shadow of guilt, and before his incarnation devoted to his Father's service, but was miraculously conceived by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost. Samson, though set apart from his mother's womb, a Nazarite by birth, was born in sin, and shapen in iniquity. But the Almighty Samson of our salvation was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and

made higher than the heavens. The Samson of Manoah and his wife was indeed raised up of God to be the deliverer of his brethren from temporary affliction; and even this limited, as it necessarily was, to the boundaries of this life, by reason of death, could not be accomplished but in part. But the Almighty Samson of our heavenly Father, was raised up to be the Deliverer of his people from everlasting ruin, and to save them from the wrath to come. And in this glorious work, Jesus is not only the author, but the finisher of the work, and hath completed the eternal redemption of our souls. Hail! thou that art mighty to save! the Lord of Hosts is thy name. Lord! let thy grace be sufficient for me, and thy strength, of which Samson's was but the mere shadow in resemblance, be made perfect in my weakness. For of thee, and through thee, and to thee, are all things; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.

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## CHAP. XIV.

### CONTENTS.

*The history of Samson occupies the whole of this Chapter. His marriage with a daughter of the Philistines: his slaying a young lion: the story of the swarm of bees after this, in the carcase of the beast: his riddle: the stratagem of his wife to solve it: his anger upon the occasion: his destruction of thirty young men of Ashkelon: his wife given to another man. These are the several contents.*

**A**ND Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

As Samson was a type of the ever blessed Jesus, we may trace some things in his conduct which will best be explained by keeping our eye upon Jesus. Thus we are told in the fourth verse that Samson's going down to the Philistines was of the Lord. Yes! the Lord overrules all Providences to his own glory and his people's welfare. So Jesus, taking upon him our nature, in the likeness of sinful flesh, became the ground-work for condemning sin in the flesh. Rom. viii. 3.

2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.

3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, *Is there* never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

4 But his father and his mother knew not that

it *was* of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

Certainly it is an unnatural alliance when grace and corruption join. For what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? And though it is an express command of our God to come out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing; yet, what an alliance did the Son of God make with our nature, when he, who knew no sin, became sin for us? 2 Cor. v. 21. Precious Jesus! oh let that alliance be productive of the glorious end proposed; that we may be made the righteousness of God in thee!

5 Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.

The young lion, roaring against Samson, is a figure of the accursed rage of the devil, against all the spiritual seed of Jesus. No sooner is a soul awakened from the death of sin to a life of righteousness, but Satan roars. While the young man in the gospel was coming to Christ, the Devil threw him down, and did tare him. Luke ix. 42.

6 And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

Carrying on the idea of Samson being a type of Christ, do we not see here an emblem of Jesus's triumph over the powers of darkness, when he was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. Matt. iv. 1.

7 And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

8 And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, *there was* a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.

There is a beautiful instruction veiled under this. The honey in the carcase of the savage, may not unaptly represent the benefits which result to believers from Adam's fall, and the momentary triumphs of Satan. As no one would expect to find any thing good in the carcase of a lion, so no one would suppose the Lord should, in the after stages of our warfare, bring good out of evil. But so it is: the malice of Satan ultimately produces glory to God, and good to his tried ones. It affords sweet food, the victories of our Jesus. And the trials

must be among the *all things which work together for good to them that love God*. Let every tried soul think of this. Rom. viii. 28.

9 And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.

Is there not a sweet instruction here, in Samson giving of the honey to his father and mother? Every one that hath tasted the sweets of salvation, is desirous to call others to partake. ‘Oh! come hither and hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul,’ is the cry of all God’s people. Psalm lxi. 16.

10 ¶ So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.

11 And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

There is always reason to suspect the kindness of false friends. Satan never more effectually deceives than under this cover. See his first proof of this, Gen. iii. 1—5.

12 ¶ And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find *it* out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments:

13 But if ye cannot declare *it* me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

14 And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.

15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson’s wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father’s house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? *is it not so?*

16 And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told *it* me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told *it* my father nor my mother, and shall I tell *it* thee?

17 And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.

18 And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What *is* sweeter than honey? and what *is* stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.

I include the whole relation of this event within the compass of one view. No doubt, there is a spiritual instruction contained in it, otherwise the Holy Ghost would not have been pleased that it should have formed a part of the inspired volume. But we have to lament our blindness of discernment upon this, and many other instances, in the holy word. Evidently, however, we observe one thing in it, that the quarrel occasioned by it laid the foundation for Samson's deliverance of Israel, and the destruction of the Philistines. And did not the very temptation of Satan on our first parents in the garden, give birth to all the glorious consequences of our redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ?

19 ¶ And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

I beg the Reader, not only in confirmation of what I said before, but also by way of keeping his eye on the whole history of Samson, as typical of some of the great outlines of redemption, to observe again in this place, that like our Jesus, this Nazarite was anointed with the Spirit of the Lord. Acts x. 38.

20 But Samson's wife was *given* to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

This is just as might have been expected. And is it not so now, and



in every age? Is not the friendship of the world enmity with God? James iv. 4. And though Jesus hath so dearly purchased his church, and redeemed her with his blood; yet how often is she given to another, and in bondage.

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### REFLECTIONS.

I WOULD pass over all other considerations in the perusal of this Chapter, to discover every feature which I can trace in this Nazarite, as pointing to the person and offices of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. And though I am a poor blind creature in such a study; yet do thou, Lord, teach me the wondrous things of thy law; and then shall I discern somewhat to comfort my mind in every part of thine holy word; *comparing spiritual things with spiritual*. Yes! blessed Jesus! I behold in the going down of thy servant to the Philistines, and tracing the wonderful events which followed, an emblem of thy gracious coming down for salvation-work to this lower world.

I view in the men of *Timnath* the baseness, treachery, and unprovoked anger of thine enemies! I behold nothing but perfidy and unfaithfulness in return for all thy favor. I see moreover, in this representation, not an unapt or distant allusion to the honey of thy gospel. How unexpected from such a quarter! How unsought for and overlooked! And what a riddle to the wisdom of this world, that God should have chosen weak things to confound the mighty. Oh! give me to eat of this honey, to be food to my soul, to recover from disease, to heal the wounds of sin. And however loathed by many, yet make me like the bee, earnest to gather it for my daily food. And be thou to me, dearest Jesus, in all thy person, relations, and offices, sweeter also than the honey, and the honey-comb.

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## CHAP. XV.

### CONTENTS.

*The history of Samson is continued through the whole of this Chapter. Several remarkable and surprizing events are here recorded of his quarrels with the Philistines, his triumphs over them, the treachery of his enemies, his great thirst, and the Lord's seasonable supply.*

**B**UT it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.

2 And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.

I beg the Reader to observe with me, merely as a matter of history in this place, what an awful darkness there must be upon the human mind by nature, when a father is so lost and insensible to decency, as to make such a proposal. And if the Reader feels suitably on the occasion, it will serve to give strength to all the views we have in favor of the principles of our holy faith.

3 ¶ And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

If we consider Samson, not simply in his own personal character, but as acting in a public character, for the punishment of God's enemies, the Philistines; this will serve to throw a light upon many circumstances in the history otherwise not so plain.

4 And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.

5 And when he had set the brands on fire, he let *them* go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards *and* olives.

6 Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? and they answered, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up and burnt her and her father with fire.

7 And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

8 And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

I pass over the other considerations here noticed to remark the most interesting, namely, of the suitable punishment on the house of Samson's wife's father. The Reader will recollect the treachery of his wife to get out of Samson the riddle, was to prevent the threatened destruction of her father's house by fire; and now the Lord suffers the very ruin which she had studied to avoid to fall upon her and her house, from the instrumentality of the husband she had injured. Our blessed Lord sweetly explains, in a reference to his holy gospel, the wisdom of doing what the Lord appoints, and of leaving the issue with him. *He*

*that will save his life, saith Christ, shall lose it: and he that will lose his life for my sake, and the gospel's, the same shall save it. Mark viii. 35.*

9 ¶ Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.

10 And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? and they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.

11 Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines *are* rulers over us? what *is* this *that* thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

12 And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

13 And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock.

I would not willingly or knowingly strain the pure word of God to bear a construction the Holy Ghost had not in view; but I think, without violence to the passage before us, in these verses, we may see, some things which bear resemblance to the ever blessed Jesus. And especially, as Samson was, on many accounts, a type of Jesus, it is hardly possible to overlook the representation Samson here makes, of the apprehending of the Lord Jesus by the Chief Priests, and Elders, before his crucifixion. The men of Judah, were those who came to seize Samson, to deliver him up into the hands of the Philistines. And the Reader will recollect, that it was the Elders of Israel which bound Jesus, and delivered him up to the Romans. And as Samson quietly yielded himself up into their hands for this purpose, when he might, by his great strength have conquered them, who doth not behold in this type of the Redeemer, our Almighty Samson, who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, when he might have smitten the host of his enemies to destruction for ever. Luke xii. 52—54.

14 ¶ And when he came unto Lehi, the Phi-

listines shouted against him ; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that *were* upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.

But, if the former view of Samson, represents to us any thing typical of Jesus, surely we see yet a brighter and a more striking evidence of it in this. When the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, he burst asunder the new cords. And when by the Spirit of the Lord, Jesus arose from the dead, how did he burst asunder the newly formed sepulchre, and loose the bands of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of them. Sweet and precious salvation ! by which He hath secured the resurrection of the just.

15 And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

16 And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

17 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi.

Certainly there is somewhat wonderfully striking in this man's history, and the most instructive view we can take of it is, when it serves to lead our hearts to Jesus. And how hath the Son of God, by the simplest weapons in his gospel, brought down the force of the mighty to the earth ! 1 Cor. i. 27, 28.

18 And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant : and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised ?

The thirst of Jesus, on the cross, was no doubt peculiarly interesting. Samson's was from fatigue, and bodily necessity. Jesus' thirst seems to have been for the salvation of souls, for he had said in the evening before, that he would drink no more of the fruit of the vine until the day he should drink it new in his Father's kingdom. Luke xxii. 18. There is somewhat highly instructive in this prayer of Samson's, in pleading past mercies, as the best argument for present. The Writer and Reader, may both learn from it, the success which followed, in God's gracious answer, that we take the most effectual method to find the Lord merciful in what is to come, when we give him glory for what he hath done before.

19 But God clave an hollow place that *was* in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which *is* in Lehi unto this day.

*En-hakkore*, means the well of him that cried.

20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

Though we have no more recorded of Samson, yet his reign as a Judge in Israel, formed this period of twenty years.

### REFLECTIONS.

DEAREST Jesus! may I, in these views of Samson, which represent him as delivered up by his countrymen into the hands of his enemies, have my soul instantly directed to the contemplation of thee, and of thy voluntary surrender; when, in the accomplishment of redemption, thou gavest thy back to the smiter, and thy cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. And may my soul so view thee, in this unequalled mark of grace and condescension, as to have my whole heart interested in all that concerns thee. But oh! precious Jesus, while I behold thy matchless power, displayed in bursting asunder the bands of death, do thou manifest the same omnipotency, in breaking the bands of sin and death in me. Lord! burst the bands of Satan, the strong man armed, in my heart; loosen his hold upon my poor fallen nature, and bring me out of the spiritual prison, where he hath long kept my soul captive. And at length, when thou shalt break through, and come in the clouds to judgment, oh! raise my body, loosened from the bands of corruption, to glorify the triumph of my God and Saviour; that having in this life known the power of his resurrection by grace, I may in that life be among the risen to glory, through the alone merits and salvation of Jesus.

## CHAP. XVI.

### CONTENTS.

*The close of Samson's history forms the subject of this Chapter. We have in it a melancholy proof of our fallen nature, in the renewed breakings out of lustful passions in Samson, and the sad consequence of them, in the loss of his eyes, when, after repeated disappointments, the Philistines got him into their hands. His recovery by grace, and the Lord's merciful answer to his prayer, with his death: these are among the relations in this chapter.*

**T**HEN went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.

What awful departures from God, we behold in men. Who should

conceive, that a man so wonderfully distinguished of God, his birth so introduced, his life so singular, and in many points becoming so lively a type of Him whose whole nature was harmless, holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners; who should have thought that he should thus have fallen! Reader! let not such views stagger thee, nor for a moment tend to shake thy faith. Many characters the Holy Ghost gives us in his sacred word, who prove the stock of corrupt nature from whence they sprung, and yet, in certain features of their lives, were appointed to shadow forth somewhat to represent the blessed Jesus. Indeed had not this been the case, there never could have been any type of the Lord Jesus at all. But as the apostle saith, *Every high Priest taken from among men is to be such as can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself is compassed with infirmities.* And yet we know that all these high Priests, with all their ministrations, and all their sacrifices, had no other design, or meaning, but to typify the blessed Jesus. Heb. v. 1, 2.

2 And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed *him* in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him.

See Reader! how alive the enemies to God, and his people are, to wait for thy halting. Oh! that every one who ventures to pursue uncleanness and the gratification of his corrupt passions, would in those Gazites surrounding Samson, behold a representation, how the accursed enemy of souls watches over the unguarded hours of sinners! Behold! ye adulterers, and adulteresses, you that drop asleep in the arms of harlots, ye captives to excess of wine, and abominable lusts; see what dangers you are exposed to, when you think all secure! 1 Thess. v. 3—10.

3 And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put *them* upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron.

I pass over every other consideration, to call the Reader's attention to the lively representation here made of Samson's wonderful strength, and that of our divine Redeemer, in his victory over death, hell, and the grave. Did not Jesus, though the soldiers secured, as they thought, the grave, and the stone upon it sealed: did he not burst asunder all the bars, and carry them away before him? Was not our dear Lord, like Samson, when they had bound him and nailed him to the cross, considered as the sure prisoner, which could not escape their hands? And yet, did he not, like Samson at midnight, just at the break of day, lead captivity captive, and come forth to the terror and confusion of all

his enemies? Yes! thou dear Redeemer! thou hast indeed, not only come forth, from the supposed confinement of the grave, but thou hast for ever prevented thine enemies, and ours, from confining our bodies and souls, for everlasting destruction. The grave, into which the bodies of thy saints are put, is now an open grave, and by thy glorious resurrection, the everlasting power, and dominion of it, is done away. So that in thy triumph, all thy people now sing; *O death where is now thy sting; O grave where is now thy victory: Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Cor. xv. 55—57.

4 ¶ And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

Again we behold the sad breakings out of our fallen state. How justly doth the Psalmist (and every one taught of God may join issue in the same language), say for himself: *The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.* Psalm xxxvi. 1.

5 And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth*, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.

6 And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength *lieth*, and where-with thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.

7 And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

9 Now *there were* men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.

10 And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell

me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound.

11 And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

12 Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And *there were* liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread.

13 And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web.

14 And she fastened *it* with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web.

15 ¶ And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart *is* not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength *lieth*.

16 And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, *so* that his soul was vexed unto death;

17 That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.

18 And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of



the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

19 And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

I see no reason to interrupt the progress of the history through the several relations given, of this artful woman's persevering spirit to ruin Samson. But I rather pass on to the spiritual improvements the history furnisheth. And here we see to what a degree of folly, and presumption, sin reduceth the mind. Samson could not but know that, as a Nazarite to God, the unshaven head was as an outward sign, or mark, of a spiritual state. What madness, what presumption therefore, was it thus to tempt God. But Reader, mark, and as you mark the instance of Samson, learn not to be high minded, but fear. What an easy prey is man, with all his boasted strength, to any and every temptation, when the Lord for one moment withdraws his support. Oh! how sweet is it to have Paul's sentiments, and from the same spirit. I can do nothing by myself, saith he: but I can do all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me. 1 Cor. iv. 4. Phil. iv. 13.

20 And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.

This is a very awful account: the Lord was departed from him, and he knew it not. It is said of Ephraim, that strangers had devoured his strength, and he knew it not: yea, grey hairs were here and there upon him, and he unconscious. Hosea vii. 9. When the strong man armed keepeth the house the goods are in peace. Luke xi. 21. Reader! think how deadened to divine things must that man's mind be, who is unconscious of the Spirit's withdrawing his influences, feels nothing of the want of quickenings, and regards not the withering state of his soul! Lord! take not thine Holy Spirit from me, ought to be the daily earnest prayer of every one. Psalm li. 11.

21 ¶ But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

Awfully let us remark the punishment suited to the offence; that is, I mean, not as it came from the hand of man, but from the correction of God. It was Samson's eyes which had become the great inlet to evil, when he first saw this harlot. The desire of the eye is one of those lusts of the flesh which the apostle marks among the daring transgres-

sions. 1 John ii. 16. But oh! how much more dreadful, had Samson's sins blinded the eyes of his soul! We hear no murmuring, no complaining, fall from the lips of Samson at the cruelty of the Philistines. No doubt through grace, he was led to see the divine justice in it, and to *accept the punishment of his iniquity*. Grace will always do this. For how unjust soever on the part of man, it was right and just on the part of God. So thought David in the case of *Shimei*, when he came forth in his distress to curse him. So let *him* curse, said David, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. 2 Sam. xvi. 10. But pause Reader! is there nothing here typical of Jesus? Did not the chief Priests, and Elders, when they had bound Jesus, and nailed him to the cross, mock, and insult the Lord of life and glory? Dearest Lord! how do all insults and injuries from man to man, sink comparatively to nothing, when we behold thine unparalleled sufferings; when the very Judge that condemned thee, in the moment of passing sentence, declared thee innocent. Matt. xxvii. 24.

22 Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

Sweet are the renewings of the Holy Ghost. Oh! how precious the returns of the Comforter, after a night of desertion!

23 ¶ Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.

24 And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

Nothing can be more plain from the history, than that it was the artful intrigue of a woman which had been the instrument for delivering Samson into the hands of the Philistines; but yet a dunghill god must have the credit. To what a desperate state of ignorance, as well as sin, is the mind capable of arriving, when the glory of God, and his honor is not acknowledged. See an awful account of this by Paul, Rom. i. 22, &c.

25 And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison-house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

26 And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the

pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

27 Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines *were* there; and *there were* upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

28 And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and, on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

30 And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with *all his* might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life.

How wonderful are all the ways and works of God! By what solemn and striking providences, doth the Lord carry on his designs in the world! Samson's triumph was greater in his death, than in all the victories of his life. But Reader! let us pass by the mere circumstances of the history, with even all the moral improvements it affords, to attend to the spiritual views it exhibits. And here surely, if any where, we are called upon to behold this Nazarite of the Old Testament, as holding forth evident marks of similitude to the glorious Nazarite of the New. Did Samson pull down the temple of Dagon at his death: and did not Jesus overthrow to the ground every false god, when he died on the cross, and when he ruined the whole empire of sin and Satan? Did Samson die voluntarily for the destruction of the Philistines? And did not our Jesus give his life, a willing ransom for the sins of his people? Herein indeed, they differed. Samson died to crush his enemies with him. But Jesus died for his enemies to have life. Did Samson by his death obtain a most decisive victory! And what victory more decisive than that of the Lord Jesus, who by his death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them, who through fear of death, are all their life time subject to bondage? Did Samson with his two hands push down the pillars of the house: and were not the arms of Jesus stretched forth on the cross, when he

made the pillars of the earth to move at their centre, and the gates of hell itself to be loosened for ever? Yes! thou precious Almighty Nazarite, thy death was distinguished with every wonder heaven could give in testimony to its importance. Herein indeed again, Samson's death differed from thine. He fell to rise no more. But thou in thy death didst open the path to everlasting life; and in thy glorious resurrection that followed, thou hast for ever destroyed that dreaded foe of our nature. Oh! blessed Lord! may my soul look on this, and learn by thy Spirit's teaching, *to rejoice with trembling*. While, as Samson's victory even in death, caused Israel to triumph over their enemies, so in the everlasting triumphs of the cross over the ungodly, (as in the instance of the Philistines), may my soul behold the sure destruction that awaits all them that know not God, nor obey the gospel of Jesus. For in that final hour when thou shalt come *to be glorified in thy saints, and to be admired in all that believe*; we know also that a tremendous judgment will take place on the enemies of thy truth, *who shall be driven from thy presence with everlasting destruction*. 2 Thess. i. 9, 10.

31 Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought *him* up, and buried him between Zorah and Esh-teol in the burying place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

It is worthy remark, how careful the Patriarchs and early believers were, to record the monuments of their sepulchres. No doubt from one, and the same cause: they all died in faith of the promised redemption. See Heb. xi. 22. 32, &c.

#### REFLECTIONS.

I CANNOT dismiss the review of this very remarkable character, Samson, without once again, and before I take a farewell leave of him, desiring grace and the divine teachings of the Holy Spirit, that I may look at him so as to profit. I would pause and consider, with what an air of importance his birth was introduced: how singularly the presence of the Lord led him on through all the remarkable periods of his life: and what decisive tokens of the same Almighty presence and favor distinguished his death. Thus brought into the world, so solemnly set apart as a Nazarite to God: and so peculiarly distinguished from every other in all the events which befel him: it is impossible but to suppose that the divine intention concerning him, was to prefigure another. And to whom shall I direct my eyes, in order to behold the person represented, but to thee, thou holy blessed glorious Nazarite, whose whole nature was *purser than snow, whiter than milk, more ruddy than rubies, and brighter than polishing sapphire*. Thy birth indeed, blessed Jesus, was miraculous; and great were the predictions and preparations, made in the sacred word for thy coming. Anointed with the Holy Ghost without measure, and solemnly set apart for thy Father's service, when thou didst come thou wast at once brought into a dis-

play of the most triumphant exploits; not indeed of the destruction of the Philistines, but in thy victory over the enemy; when from thy baptism thou wast led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. Basely wast thou betrayed as Samson, by false friends, and like him delivered up into the hands of thine enemies. But infinitely surpassing him, though thine enemies nailed thee to the cross, and then insulted thy sufferings, thou hast, by that very death, fulfilled the whole council of Jehovah, put an everlasting end to sin, with all its dreadful consequences, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, which is to all, and upon all that believe. Here then, Lord, let me behold thee in thy death, and in the triumph of it. And beseech thee, thou gracious God of my salvation, that now thou hast by thy death spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it, that thou wilt mercifully go on by the preaching of thy gospel, under thy blessed Spirit's influence, conquering and to conquer. Oh! may thy sovereign word be as the arms of Samson, to pull down all the strong holds of sin and Satan. Let that cursed foe be beheld by thy people, to fall as lightning from heaven. Let the foundation of every false god be thrown down, and the ruin of antichrist be brought to pass. Oh! let thy Kingdom come, thou dear Redeemer, and hasten the latter day glory. May that period soon arrive, when the nations of the earth shall own thy power, when every knee shall bow before thee, and every tongue confess, that thou art Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

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## CHAP. XVII.

### CONTENTS.

*The subject of this, and all that remains in the book of the Judges, puts on a different complexion from what went before. The Reader will recollect the title it bears: the transactions here recorded; where in those days when there was no king in Israel; when every man did that which was right, or pleasing, in his own eyes. And how right that was, the sad account here given doth but too plainly shew. In this chapter we have, in the example of one house and family, a lively feature of the Idolatry of the land. Micah sets up an image for his god, of silver stolen from his mother: and takes a vagabond Levite for his priest.*

AND there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name *was* Micah.

2 ¶ And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver *is* with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed *be* thou of the LORD, my son.

Observe how, out of the same mouth, when there is no grace in the

heart, come cursings or blessings. It seems very plain that money was the idol of both. Hence the son robbed the mother, and the mother cursed the son. Alas! what a dreadful state is the mind of both parent and offspring in by nature.

3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.

It is not strange, that both parent and child should still pretend to retain a reverence for Jehovah, the God of Israel, when thus openly violating one of his express commandments. Exod. xx. 4, 5.

4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.

It is worthy our notice, that in the midst of this pretended piety, the woman allowed but 200 shekels of silver for this dunghill god to be made of; whereas she had said originally, that she intended the whole eleven hundred. Reader! depend upon it, the same spirit runs through all carnal minds, branching out only in different directions. Some under the government of one corrupt passion, and some under another; but once departed from God, all are out of the way.

5 And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

Here we read of many gods. And indeed, when the one true God be not thought enough, the corrupt heart will, if tempted thereto, multiply Him to thousands. An *Ephod*, was a garment. And a *Teraphim*, which is plural, means *many* images, under the pretence of consulting them as occasion required. Observe, his son is the Priest, and himself the person to consecrate. *As with the people, so with the priest.*

6 In those days *there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

The sacred historian very properly accounts for the whole of this sad defection in Israel; *in those days there was no king*; neither order, nor government. No ministry of God to tell men of their transgressions: no magistrate to punish them. Reader! learn to set a proper estimate upon those two great blessings of the Lord, a standing ministry, to instruct men in the truths of salvation: and a well ordered government to protect those ministers. Remember: *rulers are not a terror to good works, but the evil.* Rom. xiii. 3.

7 ¶ And there was a young man out of Beth-lehem-judah of the family of Judah, who *was* a Levite, and he sojourned there.

8 And the man departed out of the city from Beth-lehem-judah to sojourn where he could find *a place*: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

The rambling conduct of this young man, manifests his real principles. The Lord had made all suitable provision for his Levites, while they remained in his service. But when idolatry is set up in Israel, a temporizing Levite who falls in with the corruptions of the people, can find no bread in God's house.

9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I *am* a Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find *a place*.

10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father, and a priest, and I will give thee ten *shekels* of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.

11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons.

12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.

The sequel of this conference, too plainly marks the Levite's character. What an awful state must it be, in a Levite of God, to hire himself out in the service of idols; and what a pitiful maintenance it was after all. Bread just to keep him from starving, a coarse garment for every day, and a little better for the Lord's day, and ten shekels of silver a year: that is about five and twenty shillings in value of our money. Oh! Lord! rather let thy true servants in the gospel of thy dear Son, be fed with the humblest fare, and cloathed with the plainest garment, than go ever so costly in the wages of sin.

13 Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to *my* priest.

Is it not astonishing, that Micah should look for good from the hand of God, while he was thus doing evil? But alas! how doth sin harden the heart, and deceive the soul. So much so (saith the prophet) *that*

*a man is not able to deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand.* See the whole on this subject. Isaiah xlv. 9—20.

### REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! pass over all lesser considerations in the perusal of this Chapter, to drop a tear over Israel's degeneracy, in setting up idols in their houses; and the corruption of the sacred order of the Levites, in acting as priests of the same. Is this Israel before whom the Lord God manifested such wonders, and to whom the Lord shewed such distinguishing grace? *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice: lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.*

Blessed be God! the day is come, the fountain is opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness, when the Lord hath cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and in which the Lord hath promised, that the prophets and the unclean spirit shall pass out of the land. Oh precious Jesus! thou prince of the tribe of Levi, give us pastors after thine own heart, and let not thy faithful servants be obliged to wander to seek places; much less be content to prostitute their sacred order for a piece of silver, and for a morsel of bread. Oh! make them more anxious to win souls than to gain kingdoms. Let the salvation of sinners in thy blood and righteousness be the sole object of their work, and here may they labor night and day in thy word and doctrine. And do thou bless them, gracious Lord, in their ministry; and when thou the Chief Shepherd shall appear, may they obtain that crown of glory which fadeth not away.

## CHAP. XVIII.

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*The same melancholy subject of idolatry is the burden of this Chapter. Certain Danites having called at the house of Micah, impiously consult the priest of Micah concerning their journey: being joined by others, they rob the house of Micah of his gods: and his priest, as might reasonably be expected, leaves the service of Micah to be priest to the robbers. Idolatry is long established among the children of Dan.*

**I**N those days *there was* no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *all their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.

The same preface introduceth this chapter as the former. No king, no government, no order. And what can the nation so circumstanced expect? How this tribe of Israel came to be so unprovided for in the general division of Canaan, is not said. Their father Jacob had prophesied of them, that they should be worldly-wise as the serpent. Gen.



xlix. 17. And Moses declared them to be endued with the courage of the lion's whelp. Deut. xxxiii. 22.

2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there.

3 When they *were* by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this *place*? and what hast thou here?

4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest.

It appears that this Levite was known to the Danites. But what a sad and disgraceful wretch, and how lost to shame, to acknowledge himself the hireling of an idolater, and the priest of an idol.

5 And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.

6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD *is* your way wherein ye go.

And still advancing in iniquity, instead of recommending them to the God of their fathers, to give them the pretended oracle of a god of silver! Was there no God in Israel, that they should enquire of such a contemptible deity?

7 Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that *were* therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and *there was* no magistrate in the land, that might put *them* to shame in *any* thing; and they *were* far from the Zidonians, and had no business with *any* man.

8 And they came unto their brethren, to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What *say* ye?

9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, *it is* very good: and *are* ye still? be not slothful to go, *and* to enter to possess the land.

10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where *there is* no want of any thing that *is* in the earth.

11 And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Esh-taol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war.

Is it not strange, that only 600 men went up armed on this occasion, when we know that the tribe of Dan when they first entered Canaan, were more than 64 thousand? Had sin and a departure from the Lord thinned their numbers? A solemn question!

12 And they went up, and pitched in Kirjath-jearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan unto this day: behold, *it is* behind Kirjath-jearim.

13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.

Though they seemed to be in earnest in their intended conquest of *Laish*, yet we see how slow they moved, that even a second day's march only brought them as far as the house of *Micah*.

14 Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of *Laish*, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do.

15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, *even* unto the house of Micah, and saluted him.

16 And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which *were* of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.

17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, *and* came in thither, *and* took the

graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men *that were* appointed with weapons of war.

What a banditti was Israel become? Had they had zeal for God's honor, and destroyed those molten images, oh! what a noble spirit would this have been?

18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye?

19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: *is it* better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?

20 And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.

It is impossible sufficiently to detest the character of this time-serving Levite. But indeed, how shall he be just to man that is unfaithful to God. And that all this base and perfidious conduct was not the effect of constraint, is evident from hence, that it is said he was glad.

21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them.

22 *And* when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that *were* in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan.

23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee; that thou comest with such'a company.

24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what *is* this *that* ye say unto me? What aileth thee?

25 And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household.

26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they *were* too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.

It is impossible to pity the deluded Micah, whose heart was so set upon idols. He confesses he had lost all in losing them. But alas! what loss could there be in them. Think Reader! what contemptible idols must those be, that could not protect themselves. And what a wretched resource must that man's be, which is thus capable of being lost. And yet even under the purest of all religions, even under the dispensation of mercy in Jesus, if any man lays stress upon any thing of his own, his frames, his feelings, his supposed attainments, as all these may be taken away, wherein doth this man differ from Micah? Precious Jesus! thou only art the *one thing needful*, the everlasting good, the Father's irrevocable gift, *the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.* Heb. xiii. 8.

27 ¶ And they took *the things* which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people *that were* at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

28 And *there was* no deliverer, because it *was* far from Zidon, and they had no business with *any* man; and it was in the valley that *lieth* by Beth-rehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.

29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city *was* Laish at the first.

30 And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.

31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

I hasten to close the awful account of this tribe, for nothing can give a more horrible description of their degeneracy, than that as soon as they had conquered *Laish*, and settled themselves in their new city of *Dan*, they set up public idolatry. Whether this Jonathan was the Levite of Micah, and now called for the first time by his name, is not said. But I rather incline to think not. It is not probable, that the Holy Ghost would close his character with the record of his name, who had thus become the wretched instrument of establishing idolatry in one of the tribes of Israel. Of all such little mention is made in the sacred word, for the most part *their memorial is perished with them*.

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### REFLECTIONS.

BEHOLD my soul! what dreadful effects the fall of man and his apostacy from God, hath wrought in the human heart. Behold! how general and even universal that apostacy is by nature. Well might the prophet, contemplating the horrid picture, confess; *all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way*. For though the different tracks, the different characters of men take lead into various bye paths; yet the bias and direction of every man's mind, in a state of nature, is all turning from God. And how very dear ought that rich dispensation of mercy which sought us in our lost estate to be, which brings back sinners from the error of their way, and turns them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God.

Precious Jesus! may it my portion to learn from hence, how much I owe to thee and to thy rich mercy, who, when running after the idols of my sinful heart, came and delivered me from this dreadful captivity. And no less to thy mercy, heavenly Father, do I desire to ascribe the great salvation, whose everlasting love made such ample provision for my recovery, in the complete redemption of thy dear Son! And thou Almighty Spirit, from whose effectual teaching, and in thy glorifying both the Father's love and Jesus's grace to my view, I am brought over from the dominion of Satan, and made willing to be saved in Jesus, in the day of thy power! Lord, let the cry of my heart evermore be like that of Ephraim, *What have I to do any more with idols!* In the Lord Jesus do I desire to rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness to make my boast. Thou art my God, and I will prepare thee an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt thee.

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## CHAP. XIX.

### CONTENTS.

*Melancholy views of Israel's transgression still appear, and are prosecuted in their contents through this Chapter. In the former we have beheld the daring sin of idolatry; here we are presented with the horrid representation of the sin of murder. The concubine of a Levite forms the chief subject of the story: her abuse: her being murdered: and the Levites conduct upon it: these form the principle events here recorded.*

**A**ND it came to pass in those days, when *there was* no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah.

The same preface opens this Chapter, no king in Israel. Reader! shall not you and I say Jesus is our king, our judge, our lawgiver, he will save us. Isaiah xxxiii. 22.

2 And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there four whole months.

"I think it probable, that though she is called his concubine, it meant his lawful wife; and indeed in the margin it is said so, for how otherwise could she be said to have acted the part of an whore.

3 And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, *and* to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses; and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.

The affection of this man to his adulteress wife, may serve to remind us of our God's tenderness to us in our fornication to him. How sweetly the Lord speaks of it himself by the prophet. *They say (saith the Lord) if a man put away his wife, and she go from him and become another man's, shall he return to her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me, saith the Lord.* Jerem. iii. 1.

4 And his father in law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there.

5 And it came to pass on the fourth day, when he arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son in law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way.

6 And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.

7 And when the man rose up to depart, his father in law urged him: therefore he lodged there again.

8 And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them.

9 And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father in law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening, I pray you tarry all night; behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to-morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home.

There is somewhat very interesting in family happiness. The Lord hath entwined the heart of man to man. And in the nearer connections of life, the knot is drawn yet closer. But as to all these creature enjoyments, simply as creatures, what the apostle saith should be ever kept in view, "That they that have wives be as though they had none: and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not;" for the transition from the house of joy to that of mourning, is but from one room to another. 1 Cor vii. 29, 30.

10 But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which *is* Jerusalem; and *there were* with him two asses saddled, his concubine also *was* with him.

11 *And* when they *were* by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.

12 And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that *is* not of the children of Israel; we shall pass over to Gibeah.

This *Gibeah* was a city in the tribe of Benjamin, and it was directly in the road towards *Shiloh*. The resolution therefore of the Levite appears to be very proper, for certainly there should seem to be more

courtesy by right to be expected by an Israelite from a Benjamite, than from the Jebusites. But the sequel shews that this was ill-founded. Alas! how many are there professing the pure and merciful religion of the Lord Jesus, whose lives need blush in the view of men of no religion.

13 And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah.

14 And they passed on and went their way: and the sun went down upon them *when they were* by Gibeah, which *belongeth* to Benjamin.

15 And they turned aside thither, to go in *and* to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for *there was* no man that took them into his house to lodging.

Probably in those days there were no public inns. But yet might not a Levite, and no doubt his dress indicated the order to which he belonged, have reasonably expected accommodation from every Israelite? The Lord had expressly pointed out that his Levites should have no inheritance with their brethren, because the Lord himself was their portion. But then this implied how much every true lover of the Lord would love a Levite! Joshua xiii. 33. But is there not in all this, somewhat that pointed to the Prince of Levites? Did not this intimate that Jesus was to be the inheritance of all his tribes? Dearest Lord! let it never be said of me, or any of thine, *I was a stranger and ye took me not in.* Matt. xxv. 43.

16 ¶ And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which *was* also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place *were* Benjamites.

The sacred historian, as if to call our attention more immediately to this person, is careful to tell us that he was only a sojourner in *Gibeah*. Is not this designed to remind us of Him, who when he came on earth to seek and save that which was lost was only a sojourner through our world.

17 And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?

18 And he said unto him, We *are* passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the side of mount



Ephraim; from thence *am* I: and I went to Bethlehem-judah, but I *am now* going to the house of the LORD; and there *is* no man that receiveth me to house.

19 Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man *which is* with thy servants: *there is* no want of any thing.

20 And the old man said, Peace *be* with thee; howsoever *let* all thy wants *lie* upon me; only lodge not in the street.

21 So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.

While we pay the tribute of just praise, to the old man, and admire his generosity, let the Reader have the eye of his mind directed to him, of whom we read in the gospel, the good Samaritan, and in him behold the pleasing representation of that heavenly Samaritan, who when he passed by, literally found our whole nature exposed in the street, without home, and without shelter, and even worse than all this, made more than half dead by the enemy of souls! Blessed Jesus! do thou say to me, Peace be with thee, let all thy wants lie on me; and may my soul lie all night between thy breasts. Song i. 13.

22 ¶ *Now* as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, *and* beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him.

I would be led to hope, that the mirth here spoken of was sacred mirth. There is no real joy but the joy of the Holy Ghost; and this is the kingdom of God. Rom. xiv. 17.

23 And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, *nay*, I pray you, do not *so* wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly.

24 Behold, *here is* my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth

good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing.

25 But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go.

26 Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord *was*, till it was light.

27 And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down *at* the door of the house, and her hands *were* upon the threshold.

28 And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered. Then the man took her *up* upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place.

29 And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, *together* with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coast of Israel.

30 And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak *your minds*.

The sad narrative of so detestable an action, and issuing from so detestable a cause, is enough to put to the blush our depraved nature. Who that reads it but must exclaim, Lord! what is man! And when we read the early breakings out of this most unnatural sin, in the days of *Lot*; look at it again here; and connect with it what the apostle saith in his days; how ought our nature to be humbled, in beholding this, among the many sad consequences of the fall. Gen. xix. 4, &c. Rom. i. 24—27. But Reader! let us turn from this sad picture of our poor fallen nature, and behold the other part of the subject, though indeed, in doing it we only turn from one sad story to another, all originating from one and the same source, man's misery and ruin by reason of the fall. What a wretched conclusion did this woman terminate her life with, from running into adultery and leaving her husband,

Behold the evidence of what the apostle saith, *the wages of sin is death*. Oh! that all such views may have this blessed influence on our hearts, to prize yet more that inestimable redemption, which is the alone security from the ruins of the fall; and lead our hearts yet nearer to Jesus, who thus tenderly speaks to his people, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help*.

### REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH the several contents in this chapter lead to the review only of the sin, and consequently the sorrow of our nature, yet my soul, if the contemplation of man's ruin by sin, prompts thy heart to admire and embrace yet more affectionately the glorious recovery by grace, and brings thee home to Him, who hath done away sin and all its real consequences by the sacrifice of himself, even this humiliating subject will form the foundation for greater praise. Yes! thou blessed Jesus, I see in thee, and thy great redemption-work, the glorious scheme of salvation, prepared long before the fall, and in the fulness of time completed, for to repair the desolations of many generations, and to restore perfect order among all the works of God. I behold the Almighty God and Father founding this plan of unequalled mercy, in the ancient settlement of eternity, and thou generously undertaking it when neither Levite nor Priest, nor righteousness, nor offering, could stand in the least stead to bring sinners to God. And what is it now in time, but the same everlasting righteousness arising out of Jehovah's everlasting love, by which the salvation of thy church and people is secured for ever. Hail! thou holy, precious, pure, and spotless Lamb of God! Oh may my soul find constant relief, and every suited encouragement, in reposing on thy righteousness, when at any time, in myself or others around me, I feel or see the sad consequences of a sinful state. Lord! I would lay low before thee, under a deep sense of sin, and this body of death I carry about with me, while taking refuge under the incense of thy merits, and seeking redemption in thy blood. Be thou to me, O Lord, all I need; *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: and may all my glorying be in thee, O Lord*.

## CHAP. XX.

### CONTENTS.

*The history in this chapter, like the two or three preceding, is full of distress, though the subject varies. From private calamities we are now introduced to the relation of public: and from an house, or family, the evil is extended to the Nation. Now we hear of the wars on account of sin. The story of the Levites' wrongs is heard in the several tribes of Israel; they form a resolution to avenge them on the Benjamites: matters soon come to an issue: and a dreadful slaughter in consequence thereof is related in this chapter.*

**T**HEN all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as

one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the Lord in Mizpeh.

2 And the chief of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword.

The readiness of all Israel to assemble upon the complaint of the Levite, seems to say, the Lord had yet a seed to serve him. And no doubt, in the worst of times, this is, and must be the case. There is a sweet promise, to this effect, Isaiah lix. 21. *Mizpeh*, was not far from *Shiloh*; so that it became a well appointed place, for the collecting Israel together from *Dan*, the most northern city; and *Beersheba*, the most southern of all the provinces.

3 (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh). Then said the children of Israel, Tell *us*, how was this wickedness?

If Benjamin had not been grossly sunk in wickedness, what a fine opportunity was here afforded to have sent in their supplication for pardon. But alas! sin hardens, and not softens, by repeated commissions.

4 And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into Gibeah that *belongeth* to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge.

5 And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, *and* thought to have slain me; and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead.

6 And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel.

7 Behold, ye *are* all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel.

I pass by the relation of the story itself, (for we had it before in the preceding chapter) to call the Reader's attention to the Levites appeal. What are, or ought to be the children of Israel? Moses had told them long before; *Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God*, Deut. vii. 6. Faithfulness to the God of their salvation, and the most brotherly love and attachment to one another, were implied in this honourable distinction. Nothing therefore could have been more admira-

bly chosen, in the Levite, than to appeal to their feelings, under this high title.

8 ¶ And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any *of us* go to his tent, neither will we any *of us* turn into his house.

9 But now this *shall be* the thing which we will do to Gibeah; *we will go up* by lot against it;

10 And we will take ten men of an hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel.

11 So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.

Oh! that all the tribes of Jesus were so consolidated in his cause, and so united to him, their great head, and to each other as the members of his mystical body: what might not be expected in their zeal for the divine honour and glory!

12 And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness *is* this that is done among you?

13 Now therefore deliver *us* the men, the children of Belial, which *are* in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel:

This fair appeal common justice required. The wicked only are to be punished in his iniquity. And this with a view also, to stop the execution of God's wrath. How lost therefore was Benjamin to refuse. But is there not in all this, the picture of human nature, hardened to its own ruin by sin.

14 But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel.

15 And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities twenty and

six thousand men that drew sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men.

16 Among all this people *there were* seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair *breadth*, and not miss.

17 And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these *were* men of war.

18 And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah *shall go up* first.

The disposition of the army of Israel, and then asking counsel from the Lord, is a sweet token for good. And, as the Lord appointed Judah to lead, who doth not see shadowed out in this, the early tokens of that war, which the Lord fights for his people against sin and Satan; and Jesus, who according to the flesh, sprang out of Judah, going before, Heb. vii. 14.

19 And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah.

20 And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah.

21 And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men.

22 And the people the men of Israel encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array in the place where they put themselves in array the first day.

23 (And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the LORD said, Go up against him).

24 And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day.

25 And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.

The apparent success of Benjamin, is a lively representation of the seeming success of Satan, in the holy war. How frequently are God's people apparently worsted, and in the conflict, prompted to exclaim, Surely the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me, Isaiah xlix. 14.

26 ¶ Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.

27 And the children of Israel enquired of the Lord, (for the ark of the covenant of God *was* there in those days,

28 And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the Lord said, Go up; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand.

29 And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah.

30 And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times.

31 And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, *and* were drawn away from the city; and they began to smite of the people, *and* kill, as at other times, in the highways, of which one goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, about thirty men of Israel.

32 And the children of Benjamin said, They *are* smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them from the city unto the highways.

33 And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baaltamar: and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, *even* out of the meadows of Gibeah.

34 And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore: but they knew not that evil *was* near them.

35 And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men: all these drew the sword.

36 So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah.

37 And the liers in wait hastened and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers in wait drew *themselves* along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword.

38 Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke rise up out of the city.

39 And when the men of Israel retired in the battle, Benjamin began to smite *and* kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons: for they said, Surely they are smitten down before us, as *in* the first battle.

40 But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites



looked behind them, and, behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven.

41 And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them.

42 Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them; and them which *came* out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them.

43 *Thus* they inclosed the Benjamites round about, *and* chased them, *and* trode them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the sun-rising.

44 And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these *were* men of valour.

45 And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men: and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them.

46 So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these *were* men of valour.

Here we see that through the whole the victory was not doubtful. The Lord hereby taught Israel, who perhaps vaunted more upon the strength of their numbers, compared to Benjamin and Gibeah, than simply leaned upon the arm of Jehovah, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. And are not God's people taught the same now, when at any time tempted to trust an arm of flesh?

47 But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.

I would not overstrain the holy word, to discover more than it is intended to convey: but in those six hundred men of Benjamin fleeing to the rock; may we not be led, at least, to reflect on the happiness, and safety of those who flee to the rock Christ Jesus, as a refuge from every evil.

48 And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with

the edge of the sword, as well the men of *every* city, as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to.

What an awful catastrophe doth the close of the chapter form: and all arising from one, and the same cause of sin! Oh! my soul, flee from the very approaches of sin, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness: but may I come out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing: then will he be the Lord my God; and I shall be one among the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

### REFLECTIONS.

HERE let me learn, from the unanimity of Israel in a just cause, and the blessing of the Lord God upon them, how much it becomes the Israel of God, to unite in the suppression of sin, and in supporting the interest of Jesus in the world. Oh! for zeal for him, and his blessed cause, who hath so loved me, as to give himself for me! Here blessed Jesus, give me grace to unite in heart and soul with all thy holy army, and to be valiant in thy cause. And, ye soldiers of the Lamb! ye who wear the regimentals of Jesus, and profess to have put on his whole armour; let me speak to you, as the Levite did at *Mizpeh*; behold! ye are children of Israel! be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Never give quarter to Satan; but resist stedfast unto death, striving against sin; and count not your life dear unto yourselves. So that you may finish your course with joy, and having fought the good fight of faith may lay hold of eternal life.

And ye men of Benjamin, shall I call you? my poor brethren in sin and transgression, oh! cast down your rebellious arms at the foot of the cross; or flee, like the men at *Rimmon*, flee to Christ Jesus for shelter, while the opportunity of escape remains, and while the door of salvation is open. Sweet is the voice, and most precious the promise: *All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.*

## CHAP. XXI.

### CONTENTS.

*This Chapter, which concludes the book of the Judges, gives the general conclusion also, of sin and its punishment in the sorrow and anguish of spirit it induceth. We have in it, the account of all God's people mourning, concerning the ruin of Benjamin. They take counsel, how to repair the breach, made by it, in one of the tribes: and from the daughters of Jabesh-gilead, and Shiloh, give them wives, to build up their inheritance.*

**N**OW the men of Israel had sworn in *Mizpeh*, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife.

There was no notice taken of this before, but it is very properly introduced here, for it serves to explain the distress of Israel, respecting the building up again of the tribe of Benjamin.

2 And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore;

3 And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to day one tribe lacking in Israel?

4 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people arose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

It is pleasing to remark, that though at this time, the interests of Religion appeared at so low an ebb; yet, the ordinances of worship were still kept up at *Shiloh*.

5 And the children of Israel said, Who *is there* among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD? For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death.

6 And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.

The importance of preserving a tribe, of the twelve Tribes of Israel, was an object, to which all Israel had regard. Perhaps the thing was from the Lord. So important is it, that even the New Jerusalem, is said to have their names on its gates. Rev. xxi. 12.

7 How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?

8 And they said, What one *is there* of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? and, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly.

9 For the people were numbered, and, behold, *there were* none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there.

10 And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded

them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children.

11 And this *is* the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man.

12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male; and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan.

13 And the whole congregation sent *some* to speak to the children of Benjamin that *were* in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them.

14 And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not.

It should seem, that the vengeance taken of the men of *Jabesh-gilead*, was more with an eye to provide in this manner wives for Benjamin, than to punish them, for not coming up against *Gibeah*.

15 And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

16 ¶ Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?

17 And they said, *There must be* an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel.

18 Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed *be* he that giveth a wife to Benjamin.

19 Then they said, Behold, *there is* a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly *in a place which is on*

the north side of Beth-el, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah.

20 Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards;

21 And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

22 And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, *that* ye should be guilty.

23 And the children of Benjamin did so, and took *them* wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.

24 And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance.

25 In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.

I pass over the whole here recorded, to bring the sum, and substance into one point of view; it affords a melancholy picture, take it altogether, very humbling to our nature, and sadly descriptive of our apostacy from God. Wherein may we be said to differ from the beasts that perish? The destruction of the men of Jabesh, and the dance at Shiloh, were both to promote the gratification of sensual lusts and appetites. I conceive one improving thought may be gathered from this annual custom of sin and folly, at *Shiloh*, in the dancing of young persons. How little did they think of the ambush, laying in wait for them. How little do our unthinking youths, and even some of riper age, in their dancings and assemblies, consider what evil spirits are around them, to prompt them on, and stimulate them to sin! And is it not a

question of great awfulness; have not many (like the daughters of *Shiloh*, in their dances, carried off by the lyers in wait), dropped suddenly dead in their midnight revels, and been hurried away, from the frivolous music of the dancing room, to the land of darkness, and shadow of death!

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### REFLECTIONS.

MAY a gracious God, be pleased to follow up his own blessed designs, in recording the sad relations of Israel in this book, to make both the Writer, and Reader of this Commentary upon it, wise, under his divine teaching, from what is written. If, Reader, the page of Israel's transgressions, in this book of the Judges, be so blessed of God the Holy Ghost, as to prompt both your heart, and mine, to behold in it, what it really is, the history of all men according to nature, and unrestrained by grace: and, if the consciousness of the whole, tends to endear Jesus, in all his Person, Offices, Relations, and Characters, as the only remedy for sin; and, if our hearts are led to him for salvation; then let us both bless the Great Author of our mercies, who hath given this, as well as *all scripture, by inspiration of God; and made it profitable, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* Amen,

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### R U T H.

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### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE Holy Ghost hath not thought proper to gratify our curiosity, in giving information from whose pen the book of *Ruth* hath issued. Had it been at all needful, no doubt the Church would have been made acquainted with it. But, that it carries with it marks of being written under his own blessed inspiration, and that he intended it for the perpetual instruction and comfort of the Church in all ages, there can be no question. Indeed, according to my view of things, the truest evidence that any Book bears his signature is, when his people are enabled, from his own precious teachings therein, to set to their seal *that God is true*. For, when at any time the Holy Ghost refreshes their minds with his word; when those sweet truths they read, in any part of the divine oracles, are made life and spirit to their hearts; this is what the Apostle says, *in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established*. And in the instance of this book of God