

Chap. 13-14:27. The Doom of Babylon.

Chaps. 13-23 contain prophecies concerning heathen nations with which Israel had to do. The first one recorded predicts the fall and destruction of Babylon. From Genesis to Revelation this city is "in fact or symbol the enemy of God and the stronghold of darkness." It is the city of Nimrod, Nebuchadnezzar, and Belshazzar. Built on both sides of the Euphrates it is said to have been from 12 to 15 miles square, had walls 87 feet thick and 350 feet high, surrounded by a great ditch always filled with water, had 100 gates of solid brass, 25 on each side. "From the gates there were streets, each 151 feet in width, which ran through the city, so that there were 50 streets in all, cutting each other at right angles. It was famous for its hanging gardens, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The city was located in a great fertile region and had extensive commerce and manufacture. It reached the zenith of its fame in the time of Nebuchadnezzar who began to reign about 100 years after the death of Isaiah. Cyrus took it by diverting the waters of the Euphrates, which ran through the midst, and entering by the channel; and the river being never restored to its proper course, overflowed the whole country, and made it a morass."

Alexander says we have here "a prophetic picture of the fall of Babylon considered as a whole, some of the traits being taken from the first and some from the last stage of the fatal process while others are indefinite or common to all."

Following the title of the prophecy (13:1) there are presented: 1. The mustering of the hosts of Jehovah for the execution of His judgment (2-5). 2. The coming of the day of Jehovah with all of its terrors (6-16). 3. The working of the instruments of Jehovah, the Medes, in the accomplishment of his vengeance upon Babylon (17-18). 4. The utter destruction and desolation of the enemy of Jehovah (19-22). 5. The promise concerning Israel, a prophecy which is expanded in Chapters 40-66 (Chap. 4:1-3). 6. The parable against the king of Babylon with a brief prophecy of Babylon's complete overthrow (4-23). This parable is in the form of a taunting song of triumph over Babylon and its fallen monarch, prominent in which are the dramatic scenes in Hades when the king of Babylon enters, and on the battlefield where the dishonored corpse of the king lies unburied. 7. The presentation of God's purpose against Assyria (verses 24-27).

13:1. "The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see."

"Burden" is from the Hebrew root meaning "to put forth with the voice," an utterance, an oracle, a weighty prophecy, commonly carrying with it the idea of the judicial sentence of God. Concerning Babylon see above introduction. Concerning Isaiah see introduction to Isaiah.

2. "Set ye up an ensign upon the bare mountain, lift up the voice to them, wave the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles."

Jehovah is mustering his armies, the order being given to His subjects. The method of gathering His hosts is by three signs all favorite with Isaiah: (1) the ensign on a bare mountain so as to be seen from afar, (2) the lifting up of the voice, (3) the waving of the hand. The people to be called are the Medes (vs. 17). The hosts are to go to the gates of the Babylon nobles.

3. "I have commanded my consecrated ones, yea, I have called my mighty men for mine anger, even my proudly exulting ones."

The consecrated ones are those set apart for a special service, those to be used as God's instruments against Babylon. Note the reference to Cyrus in Isaiah 45:1-5. As heroes proudly exulting, the Medes and Persians were to be used to execute God's wrath on Babylon, (See Jer. 51:10-24) and deliver Israel, (See Ezra 7:12-26).

4. "The noise of a multitude in the mountains, as of a great people! the noise of a tumult of the kingdoms of the nations gathered together! Jehovah of hosts is mustering the host for the battle."

Compare Jer. 50:2-3; 51:11.

A vivid picture of the noise of the gathering of the armies of Jehovah for the destruction of Babylon. In the army of Cyrus, besides Medes and Persians, Xenophon mentions Armenians and Jeremiah adds other nations (Jer. 50:9; 51:27).

5. "They come from a far country, from the uttermost part of heaven, even Jehovah, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land."

"It is the army under the guidance of Jehovah, the God of the hosts, spirits and stars whose wrath it is about to execute on the whole earth, that is, on the kingdom of the world, for the fall of Babylon is judgment, and it is accompanied with judgments upon all peoples under the Babylonian government."¹ Jehovah is the leader of the fight against his enemy. (Is. 42:13). From a far country, the remotest point in sight they are coming, Jer. 50:3, 9. Jehovah and the weapons of His wrath, (Jer. 51:20) to destroy the whole kingdom. Is. 34:2.

6. "Wail ye; for the day of Jehovah is at hand; as destruction from the Almighty shall it come."

For comment on "day of Jehovah" see note Chap. 2:12. Compare verse 34:8; Ezek. 30:3; Amos 5:18; Zeph. 1:7; 2:2-3; Mal. 4:5; Joel 1:15. mighty (Hebrew Shaddai). See Gen. 17:1; Ex. 6:2. "The outcry, wail, is founded on the expression 'the day of Jehovah is near,' which from the time of Obadiah and Joel was the watchword of prophecy."²

7. "Therefore shall all hands be feeble, and every heart of man shall melt."

This describes the weakness, helplessness, terror, despair that will come to the Babylonians, the bodily and mental effects upon them. (Josh. 5; Ps. 22:14; Jer. 50:43; Job. 4:3).

8. "And they shall be dismayed; pangs and sorrows shall take hold them; they shall be in pain as a woman in travail: they shall look amazement one at another; their faces shall be faces of flame."

A vivid description of the distress, pangs, cramps, anguish that will suddenly come upon them. At the hand-writing on the wall Belshazz-

ar's "countenance was changed in him, and his thoughts troubled him; and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." (Dan. 5:6) Such will be the sudden anguish of many on the final judgment day. I Thess. 5:3.

9. "Behold, the day of Jehovah cometh, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it."

God's justice will be exhibited on the day of Jehovah, that great and terrible day, when His wrath and fierce anger will be manifested in desolation to the land and destruction to the sinners. See verses 15-18; Jer. 6:22-23; 50:40-42; Rev. 18:8. "The wages of sin are death." Rom. 6:23(a).

10. "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine."

This is a very vivid representation of extreme calamities, the withdrawal of light from the earth. Amos says of the day of Jehovah, "It is darkness and not light" (Amos 5:18). See Is. 24:23; Joel 2:10, 31; Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12-14.

Matthew Henry says in this connection, "They shall be as men in distress at sea, when neither sun nor stars appear, Acts 27:20. It shall be as dreadful a time with them as it would be with the earth, if all the heavenly luminaries were turned into darkness; a resemblance of the day of judgment, when the sun shall be turned into darkness."

11. "And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity: and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."

As is frequent in Isaiah, the figure of speech is changed into literal expression. (See 5:7; and 11:9). In the purpose of Jehovah the wicked must be punished, in the accomplishment of which the proud must be brought low. An outstanding sin of Babylon - and of the world for that matter - was pride. Compare Jer. 51:34-38; Rev. 18:2-3; Is. 14:12-16; Dan. 5:22-23. A characteristic theme of Isaiah is that the proud must be brought low. The judgment upon Babylon is typical of what will come upon other people and nations for similar sin. See Rev. Chaps. 17 and 18.

12. "I will make a man more rare than fine gold, even a man than the gold of Ophir."

The scarcity of men to be left after this judgment is such that one man will be more rare than finest gold such as the gold of Ophir. (Isa. 13:21; Job 28:16; Ps. 45:9). The location of Ophir is a matter of conjecture, Josephus supposing it to be in the East Indies, Bruce in South Africa. Delitzsch considers the gold regions of India most probable; others Southern Arabia. This verse emphasizes that there would be a great destruction of the men, depopulating the land. Compare similar judgment upon Israel 4:1; 6:11-12.

13. "Therefore I will make the heavens to tremble, and the earth shall be shaken out of its place, in the wrath of Jehovah of hosts, and

on the day of his fierce anger."

Compare Haggai 2:6¹; Matt. 24:29, 35; Heb. 12:26-27; Rev. 20:11. While there is a sense in which the material universe, the natural world above and below, cannot remain unaffected by the wrath of God, yet the main force of this verse is probably figurative, showing the consternation, confusion and commotion in the minds and affairs of men because of the judgment of God. "The figure in Isaiah is a strong one to denote the terror of the anger of God against Babylon."³

14. "And it shall come to pass, that as the chased roe, and as sheep that no man gathereth, they shall turn every man to his own people, and shall flee every man to his own land."

The roe is a timid and swift animal. The scattering of sheep that have no shepherd is proverbial (Matt. 9:36). These figures illustrate the flight from Babylon of foreigners in the city. There were a great many there from other nations as merchants, and perhaps as warriors of the king of Babylon. This city was a world market, the "shopkeeper's city of the merchants land." See Is. 47:15.

15. "Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is taken shall fall by the sword."

Those who do not succeed in escaping from the city shall be indiscriminately slain, a wholesale massacre. Jer. 50:35-42; 51:4. Those found in the Babylon of sin may expect the judgment Babylon received. And I heard another voice from heaven saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." (Rev. 18:4-5).

16. "Their infants also shall be dashed in pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be rifled, and their wives ravished."

Not only would there be flight, and general massacre, but also horrible massacre of infants plundering of their homes and ravishing of their wives. Such atrocities evidently were committed by many of the Medes from the north, God overruling them for the execution of His righteous judgment upon the Empire which had committed the barbarities in Jerusalem. (See II Chron. 36:17 and Lam. 5:11) Such judgment is threatened in Ps. 137:8-9. Compare Ps. 76:10.

17. "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who shall not regard silver, and as for gold, they shall not delight in it."

With this verse the prophecy gives the name of the instruments God would use to conquer Babylon, namely the Medes. See Jer. 51:11 and Dan. 2:38-39. Media was an ancient kingdom, east of Assyria, in a most fertile region of Asia.

"As the Medes did not become an independent monarchy till after the date of this prediction, it affords a striking instance of prophetic foresight. At the date of this prediction they formed a part of the Assyrian Empire, but revolted at the time of the Assyrian invasion of Syria and

Israel. Their first king, Dejoces, was elected about 700 years before Christ. His son, Phraortes, conquered Persia, and the united Medes and Persians, with the aid of the Babylonians, subdued Assyria under the conduct of Cyaxares I. The conquest of Babylon was effected in the reign of Cyaxares II by the Median army, with an auxiliary force of 30,000 Persians, under the command of Cyrus, the king's nephew."⁴

The last part of this verse seems to indicate that the Medes had more thirst for blood than gold" and would not accept bribes or ransoms to secure the lives of their enemies. Proverbs 6:34-35. According to Herodotus, Cyrus attributed to the Medes the characteristic of disregard for riches.

18. "And their bows shall dash the young men in pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children."

Compare verse 16. The Medes were said to be especially skilful in the use of the bow. Extreme cruelty and lack of mercy are shown in the slaughter of young men, babies and children.

19. "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldean's pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah."

See introduction to this chapter regarding Babylon. Other appellations of Babylon are "golden city" (Is. 14:4), "mistress of kingdoms" (Is. 47:5). Compare Rev. 17:5. From glory and beauty, the Chaldean's pride (Dan. 4:30), the city came to complete destruction. Gen. 19:24; Jud. 29:23. The country of the Chaldeans was located near the head of the Persian Gulf. Their rule over Babylon began with Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar.

In view of the historical fact that the destruction of Babylon was a gradual process, first under Cyrus then followed by Darius Hystaspes, Alexander the Great, Antigonos, Demetrius, and the Parthians, and the founding of the cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, J.A. Alexander's interpretation is that the prophecy here recorded "does not relate to any one invasion or attack exclusively, but to the whole process of subjection and decay, so completely carried out through a course of ages."

20. "It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there."

Compare Is. 14:23; Jer. 51:37-43; Rev. 18:21-23.

In the light of this curse upon Babylon it is significant that Alexander the Great, proposing to make Babylon the metropolis of his empire, was stricken to death at the early age of thirty-three, his wish never becoming a reality. We are told that at the time of his death 10,000 workmen were employed for two months in clearing away the rubbish from the foundation of the Nimrod Tower.

It is said that modern Arabs, dreading evil spirits and the ghost of Nimrod, are afraid to spend a night at the site of ancient Babylon.

Alexander.

21. "But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and wild goats shall dance there."

(Compare Babylon of the Apocalypse - Rev. 18:2). Verse 20 pictures the ruin of Babylon negatively. It shall be without population and without domesticated animals. ~~At~~ the other hand verses 21-22 present the positive picture. It shall be a wilderness inhabited by wild beasts. The houses of the Babylonians shall be inhabited by doleful creatures with their strange howls or yells. In the place of the Babylonian there will be the ostrich, and in the place of the revellings of the lords and nobles, the dancing of the wild-goats.

22. "And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged."

Instead of nobles in the castles there shall be howling creatures, instead of kings and princes in the palaces, jackals. We are told that "in the present day the nightly howling and yelling of jackals still produces its weird disconcerting effect upon the traveller there." A waste and howling wilderness on the site of Babylon, the great, speaks in stentorian tones of the truth of scripture prophecy and the certainty of its fulfilment.

Different explanations have been given of the last part of this verse. One is that although the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon was uttered 174 years before its fall, yet it was intended for the comfort of the Jewish exiles who were in Babylon during the 70 years just before its fall, and from their view point the time was near.

Another suggested interpretation is that it may mean that when the appointed time for Babylon's fall should come, it would certainly take place without postponement or delay. See Rev. 18:8.

Chap. 14:1. "For Jehovah will have compassion on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the sojourner shall join himself with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob."

This is a prophecy of comfort to Israel which is expanded in Chapters 40-66. Through the destruction of Babylon the Jews will be delivered. The compassion of Jehovah for his people and His choice of them will be shown in His returning them to Palestine after their exile in Babylon, an illustration of the spiritual redemption from iniquities He gives to all the true Israel of God. Is. 40:1-2; 44:22; 57:7-8; Jer. 24:7; 29:14; Ezek. 36:24-28; Rom 3:24-25. Many of the heathen among whom they sojourn, embracing their religion, as Ruth did that of Naomi, will return with them to their own land. "And many from among the peoples of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews was fallen upon them" (Esther 8:17b). See also Is. 56:6-8; 60:3-5; 66:20; Acts 15:14-17; Eph. 2:12-19. Israel is blessed in order to be a blessing to the world.

2. "And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of Jehovah for servants and handmaids; and they shall take them captive whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors."

Cyrus and many of the people of Babylon assisted the Jews in their return from captivity (Ezra 1). See also Is. 49:22; 60:9-12; 61:5. Gentiles would take part in the restoration of the Jews to their own land. Not only so but the relation of the restored exiles to these foreigners would go with them would be the reverse of what it was in Babylon. Here the Jews had been the servants and captives. In the restoration the house of Israel would possess their oppressors and rule over them, meaning evidently not possession and rule by force, "not by physical, but by moral might; the force of love, and regard to Israel's God (Is. 60:1)". The apostle Paul said "Through love be servants one to another" (Gal. 5:13b). Many of the Jews in exile in Babylon must have lived all their religion to have exercised such an influence for good over their neighbors, leading numbers of them to embrace Jehovah as their God, and to willingly return as servants and captives to Palestine.

3. "And it shall come to pass in the day that Jehovah shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy trouble, and from the hard service wherein thou wast made to serve;"

Jehovah's compassion on Israel, and His choice of them will be manifested not only in their return, restoration and rule in their own land, but also in the rest He will give them there after the seventy hard years of exile in Babylon. Her warfare, or time of service will be accomplished (Is. 40:1). God will give them a reviving. (Ezra 9:8-9). "And Jacob shall turn, and shall be quiet and at ease, and none shall make him afraid." (Jer. 30:10; 46:27).

4. "That thou shalt take up this parable against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!"

This is a taunt-song, or song of triumph over the fall of Babylon (Rev. 18:20), and one of the finest specimens of Hebrew literature. The parable may be applied to the whole Babylonian monarchy with particular reference to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Compare Hab. 2:6-12.

"Oppressor" here denotes "exactor of tribute" and "golden city", according to Jewish commentators, "exactress of gold." Compare Dan. 2:38, "Thou art the head of gold," and Rev. 18:16, "Decked with gold."

5. "Jehovah hath broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre of the rulers."

Jehovah, with Cyrus as his instrument, destroyed the power of the wicked Babylonians, and the ^{imperial} power which was centered in their king. Jehovah put destruction in the place of Babylonian dominion.

"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?"

6. "That smote the peoples in wrath with a continual stroke, that led the nations in anger, with a persecution that none restrained."

The Babylonian imperial monarch who was a tyrant continually smiting the peoples (II Chron. 36:17) in turn was smitten and subjugated to the light of others who did not interfere with his downfall. No one could stay Jehovah's hand in His purpose to destroy Babylon. Is. 46:11.

7. "The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing."

The fall of the king of Babylon means rest and quiet among the nations which he had so cruelly oppressed. Deliverance from his yoke is the occasion of great joy in the earth. Ps. 126:3; Prov. 11:10; Jer. 1:48; Rev. 18:20; 19:1-6.

8. "Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid low, no hewer is come up against us."

Not only the earth and its inhabitants rejoice at the overthrow of the imperial kingdom of Babylon, but nature also. The trees of Lebanon are represented as rejoicing, and giving utterance to the reason for their joy. Since the king of Babylon is laid low they are not laid low. Compare Is. 55:12.

9. "Sheol from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations."

The region or abode of the dead is dramatically represented as being excited at the approach of the king of Babylon, and of stirring up the dead, or "the shades", Hebrew, Rephaim, even the leaders (Heb., he-
bats, Jer. 50:8) to meet him. Compare Ezek. 32:18-32.

10. "All they shall answer and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?"

Here the shades express their astonishment and amazement that one who had been so exalted upon earth should be brought so low and become like unto themselves in Sheol. Compare Luke 16:20-23.

11. "Thy pomp is brought down to Sheol, and the noise of thy viols; the worm is spread under thee, and worms cover thee."

See Dan. 5:1-4, 25-30, for illustration of this verse. In the place of the artistic, luxurious Babylonian couches and coverings to which the king was accustomed he has nothing but worms -- "Nothing but worms over him and worms under him, worms his bed and worms his bed-clothes."⁵

12. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, that didst lay low the nations!"

Two figures of speech are here used to describe the fall of the king. First he is addressed as the day-star fallen from heaven. Some of the church fathers applied this to the fall of Satan, considering Luke 10:18 the explanation. Hence the name Lucifer, or day-star was applied to the Devil. The second part of the verse compares the king to a tree that has been cut down to the ground. So is fallen and laid low the king who earthly glory and magnificence oppressed and subjugated the nations.

13. "And thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the uttermost parts of the north."

It was the purpose of the king to be supreme not only on the earth, but even in heaven, to be equal with God himself. One interpretation of the last clause of this verse is that it is an allusion to a hill in Jerusalem where God had agreed to meet His people (Ex. 25:22; 29:42-43) and that the king proposed to insult God by erecting his throne there. Another interpretation, probably the correct one, is that it is a mythological allusion of the heathen king to a fabulus mountain in the north where the gods were believed to dwell, that the meaning of the clause is, "I will take my seat among or above the gods upon their holy mountain."

14. "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

The apostle Paul may have had this verse in mind when he wrote that strikingly similar passage regarding the man of sin in II Thess. 4:2. "He that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God."

There is put into the mouth of the king of Babylon arrogance, pride, self-deification. Compare the spirit of Sennacherib as revealed in Is. 37:23-24, and the prince of Tyre, Ezek. 28:2.

15. "Yet thou shalt be brought down to Sheol, to the uttermost parts of the pit."

Compare the doom of this king with that of the prince of Tyre, Ezek. 28:9; the city of Capernaum, Luke 10:15; Herod the king, Acts 12:22-23. The pit is a synonym for Sheol and the uttermost parts of the pit are its inmost recesses, the most dismal part of a land of darkness."6

16. "They that see thee shall gaze at thee, they shall consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;"

The scene is now changed from Hades to the battle-field, where the corpse of the dead king is unburied. Those who see it as they gaze upon this spectacle are astonished to see the man who had moved kingdoms at his bidding now deprived of decent burial.

17. "That made the world as a wilderness, and overthrew the cities thereof; that let not loose his prisoners to their home?"

This is the king that caused waste and desolation to the land and practiced such cruelty in not releasing his prisoners.

18. "And all the kings of the nations, all of them, sleep in glory, every one in his own house."

Skinner.

The kings of the oriental nations have had magnificent tombs and mausoleums, in some instances much more attention being given to the dwellings of the dead than of the living. The pyramids of Egypt, the burial place of the Pharaohs, stand today as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Their bodies were embalmed with a fine art unknown to the modern world. To this day ancient tombs of the kings may be seen in the vicinity of the city of Jerusalem.

19. "But thou art cast forth away from thy sepulchre like an abominable branch, clothed with the slain that are thrust through with the sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a dead body trodden under foot."

In contrast to the splendid, honorable burial of other kings the body of the king of Babylon is cast out in the highest disgrace like a useless sucker from a tree thrown away by the husbandman. His body is covered with the bodies of the slain, or with the bloody, dirty garments of the slain, who had been pierced with the sword. Others slain may have been put in sepulchres, or hastily buried by the casting of stones upon their corpses, but the king of Babylon does not have even such a burial as this. His carcass lies unburied, exposed, to be trodden under foot of man. Compare II Kings 9:34-36.

20. "Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, thou hast slain thy people; the seed of evil-doers shall not be named forever."

He cannot have a splendid burial like other kings, nor even any kind of burial, because he has caused the destruction, not only of other lands but of his own land; and the murder not only of other peoples, but of his own people. The effect of such sin is that a curse shall be upon his posterity. His dynasty is doomed. Ps. 37:28.

21. "Prepare ye slaughter for his children, for the iniquity of their fathers, that they rise not up, and possess the earth, and fill the face of the world with cities."

These words are addressed to the Medes probably, calling upon them as instruments to carry into effect the curse pronounced in verse 20b. The dynasty of the king of Babylon must be cut off that such tyrants might again possess and rule the earth. See Hab. 2:8-12.

22. "And I will rise up against them, saith Jehovah of hosts, and cut off from Babylon name and remnant, and son and son's son, saith Jehovah."

In this dramatic chapter on the fall of Babylon may be heard not only the voices of the triumphant Jews, the astonished dead, and the faithful prophet, but in the climactic epilogue of verses 22-23 the direct words of the God of justice. In the last analysis it is not only the Medes as instruments, but Jehovah of hosts himself who will cut off the posterity of Babylon. Name, remnant, son and son's son emphasize the completeness of the overthrow. See Jer. 51:56-57; 62-64.

"The agreement of the prophecy with history is argued from the facts, that none of the ancient royal family of Babylon ever regained a throne, and that no Babylonian empire ever rose after the destruction of the first, Alexander the Great's project of restoring it having been defeated

by his death."⁷

23. "I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith Jehovah of hosts."

Solitary animals will take the place of the population (Is. 13:21-22; Jer. 50:39-40; Rev. 18:2), and pools of water the palaces of the princes, (Jer. 51:42-43). This probably began when Cyrus diverted the waters of the Euphrates in the conquest of Babylon. When the dykes and canals were not kept in repair the Euphrates overflowed Babylon.

Once more the completeness of the destruction is set forth when Jehovah says that he will sweep it with the broom of destruction. Jer. 51:25-26; Rev. 18:21.

24. "Jehovah of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely, as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand."

Verses 24-27 give us a short prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian power. Compare Is. 10:5-34. Jer. 50:18 seems to give us the connection between this fragment and the prophecy just given concerning Babylon. "Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria." The former has just been told most vividly. The latter is now presented. The destruction of Babylon was to be in the distant future, nearly 200 years from the time of the prophecy, while that of the Assyria power in the near future, even in Isaiah's life time, the latter event being well called by one interpreter the precursor and guarantee of the other." Alexander suggests that verses 24-27 are an appendix or conclusion to the prophecy concerning Babylon.

To bring consolation to the Jews, Jehovah interposes with an oath emphasizing the certainty that what he had purposed would come to pass. Is. 110:4; Heb. 6:17-18.

Contrast in this verse Jehovah's thought and the Assyrian's thoughts. Is. 10:7. Compare Is. 55:8-9; Is. 46:10-11; Prov. 19:21; Acts 4:28.

25. "That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains read him under foot; then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulder."

Jehovah's purpose that shall stand is definitely stated in this verse, namely that he will destroy the Assyrian power in Canaan. It was here that the hosts of Sennacherib were overthrown. See Is. 10:12, 16-19, 27-34; 30:31; 31:8; 37:7, 36-38; 10:24-27.

26. "This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations."

The purpose of Jehovah not only affects Assyria, but all the nations of the world. "The same hand of power and justice that is now to be

Alexander.

stretched out against the Assyrian for invading the people of God shall be stretched out upon all the nations that do likewise."⁸

27. "For Jehovah of hosts hath purposed, and who shall annul it?
and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

Jehovah's purpose is not only certain, definite, universal, but also irresistible. No one can disannul it or turn it back. Compare Is. 43:13; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 8:28, 31.

The fundamental truth here expressed has comforted God's people, not only in the Babylonian captivity, but in the oppressions, calamities, and persecutions throughout the ages.

Doctrinal.

"God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."⁹

8. Matthew Henry Commentary.

9. Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. 3. Sec. I.

Chap. 14:28-32. Oracle Concerning Philistia.

This prophecy is like the preceding in that its design is to bring comfort to the Jews concerning their enemy. It is in the form of commands to Philistia with reasons therefor; contrast between the future of God's people and the Philistines; and a conclusion expressing confidence in Jehovah, given in the form of an answer to the messengers of the nation.

28. "In the year the king Ahaz died was this burden."

This dates the prophecy about 726 B.C. Hezekiah began to reign after the death of Ahaz. Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria died about this time.

29. "Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of thee, because the rod that smote thee is broken; for out of the serpent's root shall come forth an adder, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent."

"The Philistines are spoken of above in chap. 9:12; 11:14, and throughout the historical books of the Old Testament, as the hereditary enemies of Israel. They are subdued by David (II Sam. 5:17-25; 21:15), and still paid tribute in the reign of Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 17:11), but rebelled against Jehoram (II Chron. 21:16,17), were again subdued by Uzziah (II Chron. 26:6), and again shook off the yoke in the reign of Ahaz (II Chron. 28:18)."¹ There are two different interpretations of the rod referred to here. One is that it means the Assyrian power, the oppressor of Philistia. In that case the reference may be to the death of Tiglath-pileser, and the adder and fiery flying serpent to the kings of Assyria, perhaps Sargon and Sennacherib. The other interpretation, which we prefer, is that the rod refers to the sceptre of the Davidic kingdom. The Philistines had rejoiced at the death of Uzziah, and may have considered him as a biting serpent (II Chron. 26:6). Their joy had increased when they shook off the yoke in the reign of Ahaz. However, the year of the death of Ahaz they are told not to rejoice at the apparent break in the power of Judah for this enemy would become even more dangerous. If the serpent means Uzziah, then it is natural to consider the adder as referring to Hezekiah (II Kings 18:8). Some suggest that that fiery flying serpent is a reference to the Messiah who would execute the divine curse upon Philistia. (See Delitzsch on Isaiah, Vol. p. 317).

30. "And the first-born of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety; and I will kill thy root with famine, and thy remnant all be slain."

The future condition of the Jews and the Philistines is contrasted. The former shall have food, even the poorest of them, while the latter shall have famine; the former shall be safe, the latter shall be slain. See Jer. Chap. 47; Amos 1:6-8.

Alexander.

? maybe Philistia

31. "Howl, O gate; cry O city; thou art melted away, O Philistia, all of thee; for there cometh a smoke out of the north, and there is no straggler in his ranks."

The Philistines are commanded to rejoice not (vs. 29); on the other hand to cry out in lamentation (vs. 31) because of the approach of the enemy from the north. This devastating army may refer to their Jewish enemy, who lived north and east of them, or it may be the Assyrian enemy as the instrument of judgment on Philistia. R. V. Margin reads the last clause, "None standeth aloof at his appointed times."

32. "What then shall one answer the messengers of the nation? That Jehovah hath founded Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge."

The conclusion is that Jehovah has founded Zion (Ps. 87:1,5; 102:16; Matt. 16:18) and in her will protect his afflicted people. (Is. 4:6; Zeph. 3:12; James 2:5). This being true the enemy of Jehovah has no reason to rejoice, and the child of God has every reason to be comforted.

Jesus said, "And upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Chaps. 15-16. Oracle Concerning Moab.

There is marked resemblance between this oracle and the one found in Jer. 48. It tells (1) of the consternation and calamity in the land of Moab, chap. 15:1-9; (2) A condition of safety for the Moabites is set forth, namely, allegiance to the kingdom of Judah, chap. 16:1-5; (3) The cause of their condition is pride and arrogancy, and the consequences, devastation and confusion in Moab, 16:6-12; (4) The concluding paragraph is of the nature of an epilogue and deals with the date of the prediction, verses 13-14.

15:1. "The burden of Moab. For in a night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and brought to nought; for in a night Kir of Moab is laid waste, and brought to nought."

For "burden" see note on Chap. 13:1.

For origin of Moabites see Gen. 19:31-37. "The Moabites inhabited the elevated land east of the Dead Sea, and though a people related by blood to Israel, the mutual relations of the two nations were hostile from the time of Saul onwards. Saul fought against them (I Sam. 14:47) and David overcame them (II Sam. 8:2). Ahab oppressed them and exacted tribute (II Kings 3:4, confirmed by king Mesha of Moab in the inscription known as the Moabite Stone); but after his death the Moabites threw off the Israelite yoke (II Kings 1:1; 3:5, Moabite Stone), and Jehoram's efforts to maintain his authority over them were ineffectual (II Kings 6-27)."¹

Ar, originally meaning city, was the capital city of Moab, located on the south side of the Arnon (Num. 22:36). Kir, originally meaning hill, was the chief or only fortress of Moab, located south-east of Ar.

The oracle announces the catastrophe came upon these two chief cities of Moab.

2. "They are gone to Bayith, and to Dibon, to the high places, to weep: Moab walleth over Nebo, and over Medeba, on all their heads is baldness, every beard is cut off."

Because of the catastrophe there becomes idolatrous lamentation attended by ~~ceremonial~~ signs of mourning. Bayith in R.V. Margin is "temple". Dibon is a place a few miles north of the Arnon, where the Moabite Stone is found. The first clause in R. V. Margin reads "Bayith and Dibon are gone up to the high places." Nebo, the name of a mountain and also a town nearby, lay east of the mouth of the Jordan (Num. 32:38; Deut. 34:1). Both Nebo and Medeba, a short distance to the south-east, are mentioned on the Moabite Stone. "According to Jerome, there was an image of Kemosh in Nebo; and among the ruins of Medeba, Seetzen recognized the foundations walls of a peculiar temple."²

3. "In their streets they gird themselves with sackcloth; on their housetops, and in their broad places, every one walleth, weeping abundantly."

In addition to baldness and cutting off of the beard as signs of mourning, there is added the wearing of sackcloth, a mourning dress; also worn in humiliation and fasting. Compare Jer. 48:37-39. At home and publicly there is general lamentation. "Weeping abundantly" means literally "going down in weeping."

4. "And Heshbon crieth out, and Elealeh; their voice is heard even unto Jahaz; therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud; his soul trembleth within him."

Heshbon was a royal city of the Amorites (Num. 21:26) 20 miles east of the Jordan, later a city of Israel (Num. 21:26) and at the time of his prophecy a city of the Moabites. Elealeh was near by. Jahaz was the place Sihon was defeated in the time of Moses. (Deut. 2:32-33). These cities are represented as joining in the national lamentation, also even the military men. The soul of Moab trembles, so great is the distress.

5. "My heart crieth out for Moab; her nobles flee unto Zoar, to Eglath-sheleishiyah: for by the ascent of Luhith with weeping they go up; for in the way of Horonaim they raise up a cry of destruction."

The comparison of the prophet himself for suffering Moab is here expressed.

Zoar was one of the cities of the plain, near the south-east corner of the Dead Sea, especially known in connection with the history of Lot. (Gen. 13:10; 19:22) R. V. Margin reads "to Eglath-sheleishiyah" as a heifer three years old," that is, unbroken or unsubdued; but the preferred reading makes it a proper name of a place. Luhith and Horonaim were also in southern Moab, the region to which the distressed nobles or fugitives flee.

6. "For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate; for the grass is withered away, the tender grass falleth, there is no green thing."

Nimrim, meaning "limpid waters," is in the northern part of Moab. Even here is desolation. According to II Kings 3:19, 25 the enemy had stopped the waters at the source. Here then is the reason for the flight to the South.

7. "Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away over the brook of the willows."

The brook of the willows was evidently in the extreme south, and is generally identified with the brook Terebinth, the boundary between Moab and Edom. The probable meaning of this verse is that because of the desolation caused by the enemy in Moab the fugitives have taken their possessions out of the country into the land of Edom for safety.

8. "For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab; the wailing thereof unto Eglaim, and the wailing thereof unto Beer-elim."

Eglaim was probably near the south end of the Dead Sea and Beer-elim, literally "the well of the princes," in the north-east of the land of Moab. The lamentation, therefore, was from one end of the land to the other.

9. "For the waters of Dimon are full of blood; for I will bring yet more upon Dimon, a lion upon them of Moab that escape, and upon the remnant of the land."

Dimon is probably Dibon of verse 2, and the waters of Dimon the Arnon. Lion may be taken literally, II Kings 17:25, or it may be understood figuratively as representing the invader. One interpreter thinks it refers to the Assyrian power, another to Judah. The judgment of God will bring additional calamities upon Moab.

Chap. 16:1. "Send ye the lambs for the ruler of the land from Selah to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion."

A condition of safety to the Moabites was allegiance to the house of David as heretofore. David had conquered Moab (II Sam. 8:2) "And the Moabites became servants to David, and brought tribute." Later the tribute of Moab to Israel was from their lambs and rams. II Kings 3:4. According to II Kings 14:7 Amaziah, king of Judah, took Sela by war. Sela may be identical with Petra, the renowned ancient capital of Edom. The meaning of this verse then, as concisely put by Barnes, is: "Pay the accustomed tribute to the Jews. Continue to seek their protection, and acknowledge your subjection to them, and you shall be safe. They will yield you protection, and these threatened judgments will not come upon you. But refuse, or withhold this, and you will be overthrown."

2. "For it shall be that, as wandering birds, as a scattered nest, so shall the daughters of Moab be at the fords of the Arnon."

Unless they seek safety according to verse one, they will be timid, homeless, wandering, in their flight and suffering at the border of Moab.

3. "Give counsel, execute justice; make thy shade as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; betray not the fugitive."

One group of interpreters understands these words to be addressed to the Moabites, calling upon them to be kind to the Jews, protect and shelter any fugitive Jews who would come to Moab. Do this in addition to sending tribute to Judah. Another group of interpreters considers these words to be an appeal of the Moabites to the Jews, begging them to give the outcast Moabites shelter and protection in the land of Judah, and relief from their distress. The context describing as it does the devastation of Moab, seems to favor the second interpretation. Compare . 56:8.

4. "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee; as for Moab, be thou a consort to him from the face of the destroyer."

The first group of interpreters referred to above considers the reference here to the outcasts of the Jews, the second understanding it mean the outcasts of Moab. The first clause of the verse is rendered in many ancient versions "Let the outcasts of Moab dwell with thee."

The last part of verse 4 and verse 5 give the reason for seeking safety and protection in Zion (or for Zion, as the case may be). In verse four the negative side is given, namely, the end of extortion, destruction, and oppression. This probably refers to the Assyrian oppression.

5. "And a throne shall be established in lovingkindness; and one shall sit thereon in truth, in the tent of David, judging, and seeking justice, and swift to do righteousness."

In contrast to the imperial power of the world characterized by extortion, destruction and oppression, the Davidic Kingdom shall be characterized by lovingkindness, truth, justice, and righteousness. Compare II Sam. 7:16; Is. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-6; Amos 9:11; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 15:15-17; Ps. 72:2-4.

6. "We have heard of the pride of Moab, that he is very proud; even of his arrogancy, and his pride, and his wrath; his boastings are nought."

The interpreters who consider the preceding verses addressed to Moab and Judah understand this verse "as a reason for believing that he will not follow the advice just given." Those who regard the preceding verses as words of the Moabitish fugitives addressed to Judah, explain this verse as a reason for rejecting their petition."

This verse emphasizes the sin of Moab, and the following verses the consequences of such sin. The sin of pride, accompanied by wrath, is written largely over Moab. Jer. 48:42.

7. "Therefore shall Moab wail for Moab, every one shall wail; for the raisin-cakes of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn, utterly stricken."

The result of sin is misery; a general lamentation in Moab. Compare 15:2-5. Kir-hareseth means "a citadel of brick;" it is probably the same place as Kir (15:1) and Kir-heres (16:11). The vineyards would be desolate.

8. "For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah; the lords of the nations have broken down the choice branches thereof, which reached even unto Jazer, which wandered into the wilderness; its shoots are spread abroad, they passed over the sea."

For Heshbon see note on 15:4. Sibmah was near to Heshbon, and Jazer about 15 miles north-east of Heshbon. The lords of the nations may have been the Assyrian invaders.

The famous vine of Sibmah was extensively cultivated in Moab, and is noted for luxuriance and fertility, yet even this wine-land languishes in the general devastation.

9. "Therefore I will weep with the weeping of Jazer for the vine of Sibmah; I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for upon thy harvest the battle shout is fallen."

In verses 9-11 is seen the sympathy of the prophet for the distressed people of Moab, who have no merry shout in their midst. Compare 15:5. For Heshbon and Elealeh see note on 15:4.

10. "And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the fruitful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither joyful noise; no treader shall tread out wine in the presses; I have made the vintage shout to cease."

There is no fruit in the fields and vineyards, and no wine in the

resses. In such desolation is the absence of gladness, joy, singing, and the joyful noise and shout which commonly characterize a rich and bountiful harvest and vintage.

11. "Wherefore my heart soundeth like a harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-heres."

In this verse and in verse 9 and 15:5 Calvin thinks the prophet assumes the character of a Moabite bewailing the calamities of Moab. However, a common interpretation of these passages which we prefer is that they express the writer's deep compassion for the distress of Moab. Compare Hos. 11:8; Phil. 2:1. "As the hand or plectrum moves the strings of the harp so that they vibrate with sound, so does the terrible thing which he presents Jehovah as saying concerning Moab move the strings of his inward parts, so that they sound in tones of deep pain. By the entrails are specially meant heart, liver, and kidneys, the noblest organs of the Psche - which, according to the Biblical idea, are the seat of the tenderest emotions, as it were the sounding-board of those hidden sounds to be found in every man."³

12. "And it shall come to pass, when Moab presenteth himself, when he wearieth himself upon the high place, and shall come to his sanctuary to pray, that he shall not prevail."

Jerome says this is the final misery - the impotence of their idols, and they do not know the true and living God. Chemosh was their chief deity, I Kings 11:7; Jer. 48:7, 35, 46; Ps. 115:3-7. The Moabites are helpless and desperate as the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel. See I Kings 18:26-29.

13. "This is the word that Jehovah spake concerning Moab in time past."

The doom of Moab just uttered, Jehovah himself had revealed to Isaiah in time past.

14. "But now Jehovah hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of a hireling, the glory of Moab shall be brought into contempt, with all his great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and of no account."

But now in addition to the prophecy just proclaimed Jehovah has revealed the definite date when it will be fulfilled. Just as the years of a hireling are definitely stipulated, so within three years, all in which Moab gloried shall come to nought. (Jer. 9:23)

This prophecy found its fulfilment probably in the Assyrian invasions either under Shalmaneser or Sennacherib, and the prophecy of Jeremiah chap. 48 under Nebuchadnezzar. (Jer. 48:46-47)

The Compassion of the Prophet.

See notes on 15:5 and 16:9-11, especially verse 11.

Delitzsch says "There is no prophecy in the Book of Isaiah in which the heart of the prophet is so painfully moved by what his spirit beholds and his mouth must prophesy."

Compare the compassion of Paul, Rom. 9:1-3. Compare the compassion of Jesus, Luke 19:41-44; Matt. 23:37-38; 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mk. 8:34; 9:36; 10:33; Luke 7:13; 10:33.

2. Continuing in regard to Israel, it is foretold that a remnant will return to Jehovah in repentance, renouncing their idolatry, 6-8. 102

Chap. 17. Judgment on Damascus, Israel and "Many Peoples."

The destruction awaiting the enemies of Judah continues before the prophet's eye. Chronologically this chapter would probably come immediately after chapter 9. Syria and Israel are here connected because of their alliance against Judah. Is. 7:1-2; 7:16; 8:4.

1. The ruin of Damascus is first foretold in verse one, that of cities of Aroer in verse 2, that of both Syria and Israel in verse 3, and particularly that of Israel in verses 4 and 5.

3. In a repetition of and enlargement upon the prophecy of ruin given the reason therefor, namely, their forgetfulness of God and turning unto idolatry. 9-11.

4. Finally is given a prediction of God's rebuke of the roaring and rushing nations, and the result; a passage evidently referring to the discomfiture of the Assyrian hosts of Sennacherib.

17:1. "The burden of Damascus. Behold Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap."

For "burden" see note on chap. 13:1.

"Damascus is called by the Arabs 'the Eye of the Desert' and the Pearl of the East.' It is to the Mohammedan the earthly reflection of paradise. The chief cause of its beauty and fertility is the abundance of water, which calls forth a most luxuriant vegetation round the city, and makes it a blooming oasis in the midst of a waste desert." ^{about}

The ruin here foretold is commonly understood to have taken place under Tiglath-pileser during the reign of king Ahaz. II Kings 16:9. See Is. 7:8. The overthrow of Damascus is an incident in connection with the fall of Israel which is enlarged upon in the following verses.

2. "The cities of Aroer are forsaken; they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid."

Of the three Aroers mentioned in the Bible (I Sam. 30:28; Josh. 12:2; 13:16; Josh. 13:25; Num. 32:34) this one is thought to be the one east of the Jordan belonging to the Kingdom of Israel (Josh. 13:25). One view is that these cities of Aroer were under the jurisdiction of Damascus. It is foretold that this section will be depopulated, becoming only a place for flocks to pasture.

3. "And the fortress shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom of Damascus, and the remnant of Syria; they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith Jehovah of hosts."

7:8, 16; 8:4.

Since Ephraim was the largest of the ten tribes it is here spoken of as representing Northern Israel. Ephraim's ruin is enlarged upon particularly by the prophet Hosea. See Hos. 3:4; 9:16-17. The Chaldee reads here "And the dominion shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom of Damascus." Just as all in which Israel gloried, that which constituted her greatness would pass away, so would that of Syria. Hos. 11.

4. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean."

The glory of Israel will diminish like the flesh of a person waxes lean through sickness, and the body becomes emaciated. Chaldee: "The riches of his glory shall be removed."

"The word glory here denotes dignity, power: - that on which they relied, and of which they boasted."²

5. "And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the standing grain, and his arm reapeth the ears; yea, it shall be as when one gleaneth ears in the valley of Rephaim."

The calamities to come upon Ephraim are not only compared to a wasting sickness, but also to the reaping of the grain from the fields. "The corn is the glory of the fields; (Ps. 65:13) but when it is reaped and gone, where is the glory? The people had by their sins made themselves ripe for ruin, and their glory was as quickly, as easily, as justly, and as irresistibly, cut down and taken away, as the corn is out of the field by the husbandman. God's judgments are compared to the thrusting in of the sickle, when the harvest is ripe. Rev. 14:15."³

The valley of Rephaim was to the south-west of Jerusalem towards Bethlehem.

6. "Yet there shall be left therein gleanings, as the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel."

Here is a third striking figure to describe Ephraim's future, that of the gathering of fruit with the gleanings left. This emphasizes that characteristic teaching of Isaiah that there will be a remnant left in Israel to survive the judgment. Is. 1:9; 10:22; Rom. 9:27; 11:4-6, 26.

7. "In that day shall men look unto their Maker, and their eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel."

The remnant who return look unto God, not only the Creator of all, but in a peculiar sense their Maker, the Holy One of Israel (See note on 4). "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else." (Is. 45:22)

Barnes.

Matthew Henry Commentary.

8. "And they shall not look to the altars, the work of their hands: neither shall they have respect to that which their fingers have made, either the Asherim, or the sun-images."

True repentance and return to God means the looking away from the altars dedicated to false gods, and the forsaking of all forms of idolatry. This was done by King Josiah (II Chron. 34:7) in contrast to his grandfather Manasseh (II Chron. 33:4,7).

According to Davis' Bible Dictionary (p. 65) Asherah, plural Asherim, was something upright made of wood (Ex. 34:13), originally, perhaps, the trunk of a tree with the branches chopped off, and was regarded as the wooden symbol of a goddess Asherah, probably Ashtoreth, the female side of the beneficent and fertilizing sun-god. (Ex. 34:13)"

9. "In that day shall their strong cities be as the forsaken places in the wood and on the mountain top, which were forsaken from before the children of Israel: and it shall be a desolation."

This verse is a repetition of and an expression of the prophecy of the ruin of Israel found in the earlier part of the chapter. The coming desolation is described by a comparison which has been variously explained. Delitzsch says "What was said in verse three, that the fortress of Ephraim is abolished, is repeated in verse nine, in a more descriptive way. To the strongly fortified cities of Ephraim it happens as to the old Canaanite forts which were still visible in their antiquated remains in the depths of the woods or on the height of the mountains." Another simpler interpretation "supposes no historical allusion, but a comparison of the approaching desolation with the neglected branches of a tree, or a forest that is felled, or a resumption of the figure of the olive tree in verse 6."

10. "For thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength; therefore thou plantest pleasant plants, and settest it with strange slips."

In this chapter God is called Jehovah, Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel, Maker, Holy One of Israel, and in this verse referred to as the God of thy Salvation, and the Rock of thy strength. Is. 12:2; 26:4.

The reason for the ruin of Ephraim is here stated - forgetfulness of Jehovah. Deut. 8:21; Ps. 9:17.

Some think that "strange slips" refer to the introduction of idolatry. V. Margin reads "vine slips of a strange god." Others think the expression has reference to foreign alliance. See Is. 2:6-8.

11. "In the day of thy planting thou hedgest it in, and in the morning thou makest thy seed to blossom; but the harvest fleeth away in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow."

Ephraim had hopeful prospects for its lovely plantations, which were cherished with great care, and which flourished for awhile, but the harvest would be bitter disappointment and grievous sorrow. The planting of sin means that "the heap of the harvest shall be inexpressible sorrow." "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Is. 8:7a). Compare Hos. 10:12-13; Gal. 6:7-8.

12. "Ah, the uproar of many peoples, that roar like the rushing of the seas; and the rushing of nations, that rush like the rushing of mighty waters."

The previous verses predicted the judgment upon Israel. Yet the instrument for the infliction of the judgment shall in turn be punished, namely, the Assyrian power. Interpreters generally understand verses 12-14 as referring to the discomfiture of the Assyrian army before Jerusalem. Compare these verses with Chap. 14:24-27. The "many peoples" probably refer to the many different nationalities which made up the Assyrian army. The noise of the approach of the invading hosts is comparable to the roaring of the seas and the rushing of mighty waters.

13. "The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters; but he shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like the whirling dust before the storm."

Although the multitude of the enemy shall rush ahead in its march, God shall rebuke them. His one word will discomfit nations. He can cause them to flee and chase them with perfect ease and effectiveness. This is typically illustrated in the case of the discomfiture of Sennacherib's host. Is. 37:29-38; 31:8,9; 30:30-33; 14:25; 10:33-34.

14. "At eventide, behold, terror; and before the morning they are cut. This is the portion of them that despoil us, and the lot of them that rob us."

Such was the case with the host of Sennacherib before Jerusalem. At eventide they were a great host (See Is. 10:28-32). Before the morning 185,000 "lay withered and slain." (Is. 37:36). Such is the fate of the enemies of Jehovah. Thus verses 13-14 show the ease, effectiveness, suddenness, and scope of the power of Jehovah in dealing with his enemies.

Chap. 18. A Prophecy Concerning Ethiopia.

Dr. Delitzsch says "The three prophecies in chapters 18, 19, 20 form a trilogy. The first treats of Ethiopia in language of the sublimest pathos. The second treats of Egypt in language of calmer description, which is expanded to some length: and the third treats of Egypt and Ethiopia in a setting of plain historical prose. The kingdom to which all the three prophecies refer is the same, namely, the Egypto-Ethiopian kingdom; but it is so dealt with that chap. 18 refers to the ruling people, chap. 19 to the ruled people, and chap. 20 embraces them both together."

Some interpreters consider chap. 18 a prophecy of the doom of Ethiopia, but the more general interpretation is that it is in the form of an address to the Ethiopian ambassadors in which is prophesied the destruction of the common enemy of Ethiopia and Judah, namely, the Assyrian power. Some think the people described in the chapter are the Ethiopians, while others suggest that they are the Assyrians. A number of expressions in the chapter admit of a great variety of interpretations. The main thought of the chapter seems to be well expressed by Delitzsch in these words: "The people here peculiarly described are the Ethiopians, and the prophet prophesies the effect on Ethiopia of the judgment concerning Assyria which Jehovah executes."

The chapter falls into three parts: 1. Following the introductory description of the land and the people is an invitation to the Ethiopians and the peoples of the world to see and hear, to witness what Jehovah would do (verses 1-3). 2. A revelation, (first in figurative language and then in what appears to be literal language) of Jehovah's purpose to destroy the Assyrian power (verses 4-6). 3. The submission of Ethiopia to Jehovah is foretold as a consequence of the manifestation of Jehovah's power. (verse 7)

1. "Ah, the land of the rustling of wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia."

"The land 'beyond the rivers of Kush' is the land bounded by the upper streams of the Nile, that is, the land lying farther to the south under the Ethiopian rule, including Ethiopia proper: it is the land of the African auxiliaries, whose names (including probably the later Nubians and Abyssinians) are mentioned in II Chron. 12:3."1 Nahum 3:9; Ezek. 30:5; Jer. 46:9.

"Rustling of wings" may refer to the swarms of insects which were found in that part of Africa. Some suggest there may be an allusion here to the dreaded tsetse-fly.

2. "That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of papyrus upon the waters, saying, Go ye swift messengers, to a nation tall and loath, to a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation that teth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide!"

Delitzsch.

These may have been ambassadors from Ethiopia come to Jerusalem. Vessels of papyrus were commonly used on the Nile. They were light kiffs, easily carried around the cataracts. The prophet tells the messengers to go with the message to the nation and people here described. Herodotus describes the Ethiopians as "the tallest and fairest of men." They are terrible - "dreaded near and far," a powerful and victorious people. Their land though partly desert had sections of fertility.

3. "All ye inhabitants of the world, and ye dwellers on the earth, when an ensign is lifted up on the mountains, see ye; and when the trumpet is blown, hear ye."

The invitation is to be extended to the Ethiopians and to all people to witness what Jehovah will do. An ensign is to be seen and a trumpet heard. The great event to which attention of the peoples is directed is revealed in the following verses, which seem to point to the destruction of the Assyrian power.

4. "For thus hath Jehovah said unto me, I will be still, and I will behold in my dwelling-place, like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest."

Jehovah had revealed unto the prophet that Jehovah would be quiet and silent, like the stillness of the clear heat, and silence of the dew. The idea seems to be that Jehovah would allow the enemy to proceed so far in its plans without interference. This passage is similar in meaning to Ps. 2:4-5. For a time Jehovah is at repose in His dwelling-place while the nations are raging. Then will He speak. He will vex.

5. "For before the harvest, when the blossom is over, and the flower cometh a ripening grape, he will cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks, and the spreading branches will he take away and cut down."

The silence of Jehovah sitting in His dwelling-place in the heavens is broken. He will allow the plans of the enemy to go on almost, but not quite, to completion. Sennacherib's hosts will encamp just outside Jerusalem. The harvest is almost ripe but the crop will be spoiled. The grapes are almost ripe on the vines, but he will cut off the sprigs and the spreading branches. The truth expressed figuratively here is that Jehovah by His supernatural power will destroy the enemy just as his plans are nearing completion. Suddenly, violently He will smite the host of the invaders. See 10:17; 14:25; 17:13-14.

6. "They shall be left together unto the ravenous birds of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth; and the ravenous birds shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them."

The common explanation of this verse is that it is literal language referring to the dead bodies of the slain of the Assyrians which shall be left for the ravenous birds and beasts to devour - a most ^{very} gruesome picture. Compare Rev. 19:17-18.

Alexander suggests another possible interpretation which carries out the figure of the fifth verse, making the sprigs and branches the subject of the sentence. He says, "As the act of devouring is not expressly mentioned, the reference may be, not to the carnivorous habits of the animals, but to their wild and solitary life. In that case the sense would be that the amputated branches, and the desolated vineyard itself, shall

urnish lairs and nests for beasts and birds which commonly frequent the wildest solitudes, implying abandonment and utter desolation."

7. "In that time shall a present be brought unto Jehovah of hosts from a people tall and smooth, even from a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide, to the place of the name of Jehovah of hosts, the mount Zion."

These people peculiarly described, and commonly believed to be the Ethiopians, shall bring their tribute of praise and homage to Jehovah, as a consequence of the manifestation of Jehovah's power in overthrowing the host of the enemy. Probably the main force of this prediction is a foreshadowing of the conversion of the Ethiopians to the Christian faith. Is. 45:14; II Chron. 32:33; Ps. 68:31; 72:9-15; Ps. 87:4; Zeph. 3:10; Mal. 1:11; Acts 2:10; Acts 8:27-38.

Chap. 19. The Collapse and Conversion of Egypt.

See Introduction to Chap. 18.

The first part of chapter 19 tells of collapse, the second of conversion; the first devastation, the second return to Jehovah; the first judgment, the second salvation; the first threatening, the second promises. Some make the division at the end of verse 15, others at the end of verse 17. Delitzsch says, "Between judgment and salvation there stands the terror in verses 16, 17 as the bridge from the former to the latter." The chapter may be subdivided as follows: 1. Following the manifestation of Jehovah to execute judgment will come the collapse of religion and government in Egypt. (vs. 1-4). 2. This judgment will be continued in the drying up of the waters which will result in the collapse of agriculture, fishing industry, and manufacturing. (vs. 5-10). 3. Jehovah's judgment is further seen in the collapse of the wisdom and courage of the Egyptians. (vs. 11-17). 4. There will be the conversion of many of the Egyptians to the true religion. (vs. 18-22). 5. There will be a missionary covenant of Egypt, Assyria, and Israel, a glorious Triple Alliance" for the blessing of mankind. (vs. 23-25).

Chap. 19:1. "The burden of Egypt. Behold Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall tremble at his presence; and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it."

For "burden" see note on 13:1.

Egypt, the nursery of the children of Israel, and the training school of the great leader and law-giver, Moses, was in the time of Isaiah one of the two leading powers of Western Asia, the other being Assyria. (See Introduction to Isaiah, Times of Isaiah).

Jehovah appears as the God of judgment coming swiftly from heaven in judicial majesty. Compare Mt. 26:64 and Rev. 1:7; Ps. 18:10; Ps. 4:3.

Idolatry was most deeply rooted in Egypt. See Ex. 12:12; Jer. 43:10; 46:25; Ezek. 30:13. Idols are "non-entities." See note on chap. 18. Egyptians worshipped the heavenly bodies, various kinds of animals, such as the bull and crocodile, and the Nile River. A large number of deities were worshipped. Ra was the sun-god. Herodotus said it was easier to find a god than a man on the Nile.

The terrifying effect of Jehovah's presence is described in poetic language - idols tremble (I Sam. 5:2-4) and the heart of Egypt melts. (vs. 16).

2. "And I will stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians; and they shall fight everyone against his brother, and everyone against his neighbor; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom."

Jehovah himself speaks foretelling civil strife and anarchy, of which He is not the Author but which He permits as a means of judgment on the Egyptians for their sin. There were Upper and Lower Egypt divided into a number of districts or provinces, and internal strife

as common. "Oh the wretchedness brought upon a people by their disagreements among themselves."

3. "And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst of it; and I will destroy the counsel thereof; and they shall seek unto the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards."

"Spirit" here refers to intellect - (See vs. 11-13) for which Egypt was famous. (Acts 7:22). The intellect will "be emptied" and Jehovah will "swallow up" the counsel (1 Cor. 3:19, 20) and the people will seek idols and incantations. See note on chap. 8:19. I Chron. 0:13.

4. "And I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts."

There have been many conjectures as to who the cruel lord and fierce king was. Some say it was Psammetichus, father of Pharaoh Necho, who had sole dominion of Egypt for 54 years. Another says the general reference is to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 46:26) and particular reference to Sennacherib and Sargon. In view of the diversity of explanations Alexander concludes that "the Prophet is describing in a general way the political vicissitudes of Egypt, one of which would be subjection to an arbitrary power, whether foreign or domestic, or to both at different periods of its history."

5. "And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be dried and become dry."

Following the political calamities just described we have here physical calamities.

The failure of the Nile to overflow in Egypt to the desired height means general famine and distress. How vividly this sets forth the judgment of God upon Egypt, since the Egyptians are so dependent upon the periodic overflow of the Nile for their sustenance.

Both "sea" and "river" in this verse evidently refer to the Nile, which is still called "sea" in Egypt.

6. "And the rivers shall become foul; the streams of Egypt shall be diminished and dried up; the reeds and flags shall wither away."

The natural and artificial branches of the Nile, the canals and irrigation system of Egypt, when lacking in water will bring general distress and sickness, and vegetation will suffer. Compare Ex. 7:18 and . 37:25.

7. "The meadows by the Nile, by the brink of the Nile, and all the sown fields of the Nile, shall become dry, be driven away, and be no more."

^{24:16} A vivid realization of drought and devastation when even on the banks of the Nile the meadows and sown fields become dry as dust. All agriculture is paralyzed.

8. "And the fishers shall lament, and all they that cast angle into the Nile shall mourn, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish."

One lasting impression the children of Israel had of Egypt was the fish they had to eat there. (Num. 11:5).

"The great abundance of fish produced in the Nile was an invaluable provision of nature in a country which had neither extended pasture grounds, nor large herds of cattle and where corn was the principal production."¹

The drying up of the waters of Egypt will mean the fishing industry will be ruined, resulting in lamentation and languishing of the fishermen. "Those are genuine tears which are shed over lost money."

9. "Moreover they that work in combed flax, and they that weave white cloth, shall be confounded."

Ancient Egypt was noted for its fine textile manufactures, linen and cotton. Ezek. 27:7 speaks of "fine linen with brodered work from Egypt." Ex. 26:36 suggests that the Israelites must have learned this industry in Egypt. In modern times it has been shown that the cloth in Egyptian mummies is linen.

This manufacture of linen cloth for dresses for the priests, and bandages for the mummies, and of cotton cloth to make clothes for general use would fail along with agriculture and fishing.

10. "And the pillars of Egypt shall be broken in pieces; all they that work for hire shall be grieved in soul."

This seems to be a summary statement foretelling the collapse of the two classes, the nobility and the common people, the pillars or foundations, and they that work for hire or that make dams.

11. "The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish; the counsel of the best counsellors of Pharoah is become brutish; how say ye unto Pharoah, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings."

There will be a collapse of the wisdom of the advisers of Pharoah, king of Egypt. Pharoah was a name commonly applied to all the kings of Egypt. Ancient Egypt was noted for its wisdom. We are told that Solomon's wisdom excelled all the wisdom of Egypt (I Kings 4:30) and that Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). The nobles and counsellors boasted of their wisdom, pedigree, and antiquity. Their wisdom is become utter foolishness (I Cor. 1:19-20) their advice brutish (Ps. 73:22).

"Zoan (Tanis, between the two most easterly mouths of the Nile), an ancient city (Num. 13:22), had played an important part in Egyptain history. Formerly the seat of the Hyksos kings, it had subsequently given its name to two dynasties (21st and 23rd)." It was a place of miracles at the time of Moses, Ps. 78:12, 43.

12. "Where then are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now; and let them know what Jehovah of hosts hath purposed concerning Egypt."

In these words addressed to Pharoah the folly of his counsellors is exposed. They are unable even to foresee the future, much less to give helpful advice about it. Is. 40:13-14. They know not Jehovah's purpose concerning Egypt. Rom. 9:17; Rom 1:33-34.

13. "The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Memphis are deceived; they have caused Egypt to go astray, that are the cornerstone of her tribes."

Memphis was the ancient capital of Lower Egypt located about five miles from the great pyramids and the sphinx, and residence of the kings until the Ptolemies moved to Alexandria. Much of the materials of the old city were used in building Cairo not far distant.

The princes of these chief cities instead of giving helpful advice gave harmful advice, advocating unwise policy which ended in disaster. Rom. 1:22.

14. "Jehovah hath mingled a spirit of perverseness in the midst of her; and they have caused Egypt to go astray in every work thereof, as drunken man staggereth in his vomit."

The folly of the Egyptians is sent upon them in judgment by Jehovah. "spirit" in this verse means "supernatural influence." Compare "spirit of deep slumber" (Is. 29:10), and II Thess. 2:11; Job 12:16. "The people made so perverse by false counsels and hopes that it lies there like a drunk man in his own vomit, and, not being able to extricate itself, gropes and rolls about therein."²

15. "Neither shall there be for Egypt any work; which head or tail, palm-branch or rush, may do."

"Work here means anything done or to be done including private business and public affairs."³ Head and tail, palm-branch and rush, refer to all classes of society. See note on 9:14-15. Compare verse 10, each summary statements of general calamity in Egypt.

16. "In that day shall the Egyptians be like unto women; and they shall tremble and fear because of the shaking of the hand of Jehovah of hosts, which he shaketh over them."

This and the following verse, called the bridge between the two sections of the chapter, (See Introduction to this chapter) tell of the error that will come upon the Egyptians and the reasons therefor. Their consternation is compared to that of women, timid, helpless, fearful. One reason for their fear is the threatening judgment of Jehovah. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10:31)

Delitzsch.
Alexander.

17. "And the land of Judah shall become a terror unto Egypt; every one to whom mention is made thereof shall be afraid, because of the purpose of Jehovah of hosts, which he purposeth against it."

Another reason for terror is the land of Judah, even the mention of it. The God of Judah is the God of judgment who purposes and none can annul it. Is. 14:24, 26;27; 46:10-11; Dan. 4:35.

18. "In that day there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan, and swear to Jehovah of hosts; one shall be called 'The city of destruction'."

Over against judgment and terror there is prophesied in the latter part of this chapter salvation - a glorious missionary message. Many of the Egyptians will be converted and return to Jehovah. "Five cities", new for Egypt, suggests the commencement of their conversion. Is. 11:11; Jer. 31:13; Ps. 68:31. Speaking the language of Canaan, the Hebrew language, suggests their confession of the true religion. "For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve him with one consent." (Zeph. 3:9) "To swear to Jehovah of hosts" means to devote one's self to Him acknowledging His sovereignty by swearing allegiance to Him. Is. 45:23-24.

Two different views of the last clause, the first being our preference, are given by Matthew Henry as follows: (1) One of the five cities shall be the city of Heres, or of the sun, Heliopolis, where the sun is worshipped, the most infamous of all the cities of Egypt for idolatry; even there shall be a wonderful reformation - they shall speak the language of Canaan. (2) Or it may be taken thus, as we render it. That for every five cities that shall embrace religion, there shall be one (a sixth part of the cities of Egypt) that shall reject it, and that shall be called a city of destruction because it refuses the method of salvation.

19. "In that day shall there be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to Jehovah."

As Abraham builded an altar in Canaan to Jehovah who appeared to him (Gen. 12:7), so shall there be an altar in the midst of Egypt, indicating that among the Egyptians there would be "Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29).

As Jacob set up a pillar at Bethel, and called the place the house of God, so there would be a pillar set up on the border of Egypt that among the Egyptians there would be children of Israel. Compare Rom. 2:29.

20. "And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto Jehovah of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they shall cry unto Jehovah because of oppressors, and he will send them a savior, and a defender, and he will deliver them."

The altar and pillar shall be for a sign and a witness. As worshippers of Jehovah rather than idols they will cry unto Him in their troubles and He will save them out of their distresses, as He did Israel the days of the judges. (Judges 3:9, etc.).

The promise of a savior and defender some think had a partial fulfillment in a deliverer such as Alexander the Great who freed the Egyptians from oppression by the Persians under Cambyzes. However, it is fulfilled in the highest sense only by Jesus Christ, the only Savior from sin. Is. 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21, 22; 49:26; 60:26; Luke 2:11; Tit, 2:13.

21. "And Jehovah shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know Jehovah in that day; yea, they shall worship with sacrifice and oblation, and shall vow a vow unto Jehovah, and shall perform it."

This is a great missionary passage. Not only five cities in Egypt will embrace the true religion, not only will there be an altar to Jehovah in the midst, and a pillar to Jehovah on the border, but the knowledge of Jehovah shall be spread abroad in Egypt; many of the Egyptians shall receive it and become true worshippers. One of the primary means for the spreading of the knowledge of Jehovah in Egypt was through the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. At Alexandria, Egypt, which was named for Alexander the Great, the Old Testament was translated into Greek for the Greek-speaking Jews, who lived in large numbers, not only in that city, but in other parts of Egypt. They formed a strong Jewish background in Egypt for the spread of Christianity. Ps. 98:2-3; Gal. 4:8-9; Zeph. 3:10; Mal. 1:11.

22. "And Jehovah will smite Egypt, smiting and healing; and they shall return to Jehovah and he will be entreated of them, and will heal them."

"This verse may indeed be regarded as a recapitulation of the whole preceding prophecy, consisting as it does of an extended threatening (vs. 1-17) followed by an ample promise (vs. 18-21)."⁴ God will grievously chasten Egypt but the effect of it will be to lead them to repentance. Collapse will be followed by conversion, judgment by salvation. See Heb. 12:11; Is. 55:7; Amos 4:6-12; Is. 27:14; 45:14; Ps. 12:27.

23. "In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall worship with the Assyrians."

The word "highway" here "is a figure for easy, free and intimate communication." Is. 11:16; 35:8-10; 40:3-5. Heretofore Egypt and Assyria had met repeatedly as enemies but in their returning to Jehovah their ancient enmity would be put aside, and they would be united in serving the true and living God. They would have happy spiritual intercourse because of their common faith in Jehovah. Compare Eph. 2:18-22 and 3:6-8.

24. "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, blessing in the midst of the earth."

Israel shall be one of three, not necessarily in a political or civil alliance, but joined in the worship of the same God, Jehovah. Israel, located geographically between these two world powers, will accomplish its mission of being a blessing, while at the same time it is

Alexander.

ing blessed. Gen. 12:2. "Blessing is here used in a comprehensive sense, as denoting at the same time a source of blessing, a means of blessing, and an object to be blessed."⁵ See Rom. 10:11-13.

25. "For that Jehovah of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."

Here is a benediction pronounced upon both Jew and Gentile alike. The three titles here applied to the three peoples are commonly applied elsewhere to Israel alone.

"To describe these two great belligerent powers as at peace with Israel and one another, was not only to foretell a most surprising revolution in the state of the world, but to intimate at least a future change in the relation of the Jews and Gentiles. When he goes still further and describes these representatives of heathenism as received into the covenant and sharing with the church of God its most destructive titles, we have one of the clearest and most striking predictions of the calling of the Gentiles that the word of God contains."⁶ Col. 3:10-11.

This prophecy foreshadows the teaching of Paul in Ephesians, chapters 2 and 3, not only of the admission of the Gentiles into the church of God, but also of their equal partnership in the church of God.

. Ibid.

. Ibid.

Chap. 20. The Captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia Foretold.

The introduction to this chapter gives the date of the symbolic action by which is predicted the captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia (vs. 1). Verse 2 gives Jehovah's direction or instruction, and the prophet's obedient symbolic action. Verses 3 and 4 record Jehovah's explanation of the symbol, and verses 5 and 6 the application. The purpose of this prophecy is to warn the Jews not to put their trust in Egypt and Ethiopia and to win them back to a reliance upon Jehovah.

20.1. "In the year that Tartan came unto Ahsdod when Sargon the King of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it;"

Tartan was not a proper name, but the official title of the Assyrian commander-in-chief. See II Kings 18:17.

Ashdod, called Azotus by the Greeks (Acts 8:40) was one of the five notable cities of the Philistines. In the time of Isaiah it was of strategic military importance, considered the key to Egypt. Herodotus says that Psammetichus besieged it for 29 years. This was probably following the event here recorded in order to recover it from Assyria or Egypt.

Sargon was the successor of Shalmanassar, and reigned from 722 to 685 B.C. He besieged Ashdod in the year 711 B.C. The attack upon Ashdod was a part of his plan to subdue Egypt. "As the Philistines were led by their situation, and probably also by their kinship, to take the side of Egypt, the conquest of Ashdod was an indispensable preliminary of the expedition against Egypt."¹

2. "At that time Jehovah spake by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put thy shoe from off thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot."

As Jeremiah was directed of God to perform a symbolic act (Jer. 13:1-7) so the divine direction is given to Isaiah here.

Sackcloth was not only a common mourning dress, but also the garb of a prophet like Elijah (I Kings 1:8) and John the Baptist (Mt. 3:4). Isaiah was directed to lay aside the garment of the mourner and the prophet, and to take off his shoes. His obedience was prompt, like that of Joshua, (Josh. 5:15).

The word "naked" here as in a number of places in scripture does not mean entire nudity. It probably has reference to the laying aside of the outer garment. Compare John 21:7 (margin); I Sam. 19:24; II Sam. 6:20.

"Isaiah has to lay off the garment of the preacher of repentance and of the mourner, so that only his tunic remains; and in this dress, and moreover barefooted, he has to appear in public. It is the costume of a man who has been robbed and disgraced of a beggar, it may be, or a prisoner of war."²

Delitzsch.

Ibid.

3. "And Jehovah said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder concerning Egypt and concerning Ethiopia,"

This verse has been variously understood. Alexander says "The prophet probably exposed himself but once in the way described, after which he continued to be a sign and wonder for three years, i.e. till the fulfilment of the prophecy.

Rosenmuller thinks the symbolic action was continued during the three years at intervals to keep it before the minds of the people. A less probable view, like that of Barnes, joins "three years" with "sign", a three years' sign, that is, a sign and indication that a three years' calamity would come upon Egypt and Ethiopia.

4. "So shall the king of Assyria lead away the captives of Egypt, and the exiles of Ethiopia, young and old, naked and barefoot, and with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt."

Here is the heart of the interpretation of the symbolic action of the prophet. It was to symbolize the fall and captivity of the Egypto-Ethiopian kingdom. Just as the prophet was stripped of his garment and barefoot, so would the captives and exiles of these countries be stripped and put to shame by the king of Assyria.

5. "And they shall be dismayed and confounded, because of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory."

"The meaning of the verse is, that they who had relied on Egypt and its ally Ethiopia for aid against Assyria, whether Jews or Philistines or both, should be confounded at beholding Egypt and Ethiopia themselves subdued." Palestine hoped to make an alliance with Ethiopia, "their expectation", and had already completed an alliance with Egypt, "their glory". If Egypt and Ethiopia would be led into captivity, how foolish or Palestine to trust in them for aid! Is 36:6; Jer. 17:5.

6. "And the inhabitant of this coast-land shall say in that day, behold, such is our expectation, whither we fled for help to be delivered from the King of Assyria; and we, how shall we escape?"

This coast-land evidently refers to the land of Palestine in general including Judea. With the fall of the powers in which they had trusted for aid, what hope of escape is left for a smaller and weaker state?

In the last clause of this verse "we" is emphatic. Not Egypt, but Jehovah can help. Is. 31:1-3. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Heb. 2:3).

Alexander.

Chap. 21:1-10. Oracle Concerning the Wilderness of the Sea.

Like chapters 13 and 14 these verses contain a prophecy of the overthrow of Babylon by the Medes and Persians, and their design is the same as chapters 13 and 14, namely, to bring comfort and assurance to the exiled Jews in Babylon. The first part of the prophecy tells of the approach of the conquerors, and the resulting alarm. (vs. 1-4) Then is given a dramatic picture of their advance to victory, and its setting in the city of Babylon (5-9). The closing verse (10) is in the form of an address or apostrophe to the Jews in Babylon to give them assurance that they would be delivered.

21:1. "The burden of the wilderness of the sea. As whirlwinds in the South sweep through, it cometh from the wilderness, from a terrible and."

For "burden" see note on chap. 13:1.

"Wilderness of the sea" is generally understood to mean Babylonia. The plain of Babylon was a flat country of lakes and marshes, and often was overflowed by the waters of the Euphrates. See Is. 13:20-22; 14:22; Jer. 51:13, 42.

The rapidity of the approach of the invader is compared to the weeping whirlwinds in the South. His approach is from the wilderness, probably the plain between Babylon and Persia; from the terrible land, the Medo-Persian land, a waste and mountainous country which bred formidable soldiers. Is. 13:17-18.

2. "A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous man dealt treacherously, and the destroyer destroyeth. Go up, O Elam; besiege Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease."

"The first phrase means a vision of severe and awful judgments. The next clause be applied to Cyrus, one of the terms may describe the stratagems of war, as the other does its violence. This is more natural as Babylon was actually taken by stratagem."¹ History tells that two of Belshazzar's high officers went over to Cyrus. Being familiar with the city they led the invaders direct to the palace where the king of Babylon was slain.

Elam and Media were the dominions of Cyrus. "The former lay east of the Tigris and north of the Persian Gulf; Media was the mountainous district adjoining it on the north. Cyrus, according to the Babylonian records, was originally king of Assyria in the north of Elam; in 549 he conquered Media, uniting the two in one kingdom."² Compare 13:17-18; Jer. 50:14; Dan. 5:28.

Jehovah continues to speak in the last clause of the verse. When his instrument to destroy Babylon advanced to take the city the sighing which had been caused by Babylon ceased. Compare 14:1-3, 7-8; 35:10; Jer. 31:11, 12, 20.

Alexander.

Cambridge Bible. Isaiah, p. 170.

3. "Therefore are my loins filled with anguish; pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman in travail: I am pained so that I cannot hear; I am dismayed so that I cannot see."

This verse and the following seem to represent the prophet as being in Babylon, and with great emotion sympathizing with the suffering people, as he is represented as doing at the calamities of Moab, Chaps. 15:5 and 16:11. Some view these as the words of a captive Jew, or of a Babylonian. Calvin's view is that the prophet assumes for the time, the character of a Babylonian, and that he does not here describe the feelings of his own heart. In keeping with Calvin's peculiar view are the words of Stock, "Vivacity is here imparted to the description by the Prophet's speaking of himself as of a Babylonian present at Belshazzar's feast, on the night when the town was surprised by Cyrus." Dan. 5:5,6.

4. "My heart fluttereth, horror hath affrighted me; the twilight that I desired hath been turned into trembling unto me."

Alexander points out that "there are two interpretations of the last clause. One supposes it to mean that the night desired as a time of rest is changed into a time of terror; the other that a night of festivity is changed into a time of terror. That the court was revelling when Cyrus took the city, is stated in the general by Herodotus and Xenophon, and in full detail by Daniel.

Matthew Henry says it should seem that it is the king of Babylon who is here brought in, in verses 3 and 4, sadly lamenting his inevitable fate. "The last words of verse 4," he says, "plainly refer to that aggravating circumstance of Belshazzar's fall, that he was slain on that night when he was at the height of his mirth and jollity." Dan. 5:1, 5, 30.

5. "They prepare the table, they set the watch, they eat, they drink: rise up ye princes, anoint the shield."

Here is a vivid description of what took place in Babylon the night Cyrus conquered it. First there was the feast prepared. Then the watch set so that they might be undisturbed. Then followed the drunken idolatrous feast (Dan. 5). The alarm is sounded at the noise of the enemy at the gates of the palace, and the order to prepare for self-defense.

6. "For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman; let him declare what he seeth:"

The watchman here may be the prophet himself. Alexander suggests that the Prophet introduces an ideal watchman as announcing what he actually sees.

The watchman is introduced frequently in Old Testament Scripture. I Sam. 18:24; II Kings 9:17; Jer. 51:12; Ezek. 3:17; 33:2-7; Ps. 130:6.

Isaiah's "Watchman Oracles" are grouped here in chapters 21-22.

7. "And when he seeth a troop, horsemen in pairs, a troop of asses, a troop of camels, he shall hearken diligently with much heed."

The watchman sees the approach of the Persian army, - "the army

of the foe in orderly, silent, caravan-like, self-confident march." See Jer. 51:31-32.

8. "And he cried as a lion: O Lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the day-time, and am set in my ward whole nights."

"And he cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth" (Rev. 10:3a). He proclaims the diligence with which he is continually keeping the watch. He is like the prophet who said, "I will stand upon my watch, and sit me upon the tower" (Hab. 2:1a).

9. "And, behold, here cometh a troop of men, horsemen in pairs. And he answered and said, Fallen, Fallen is Babylon; and all the graven images of her gods are broken unto the ground."

"The structure of the passage is highly dramatic. In the sixth verse, the prophet is commanded to set a watch. In the seventh the sentinel is ordered to look out for an army of men, mounted on horses, camels, and asses. In the eighth, he reports himself as being at his post. In the ninth, he sees the very army which had been described as approaching."³

The last half of verse nine tells the significance of what he described in the first half of the verse as seeing. The conquering invader takes possession of the city of Babylon, and destroys her idols. Is. 13:19; 14:4; 46:1-2; 47:5,9; 48:14; Jer. 50:2,3,9,29,38,42; 51:9,14,47,52,64; Rev. 14:8; 18:1,2,21. "Babylon was distinguished for its pride, arrogance, and haughtiness. It became, therefore, the emblem of all that is haughty, and as such is used by John in the Apocalypse."⁴ The city was particularly celebrated for its idolatry, its principal god being Bel.

The Persian conquerors of Babylon had a great aversion to all images. We are told that they not only considered the use of them unlawful, but, that they charged those who did use them with madness and folly. This explains why the Persians were such effective instruments of God for the destruction of all the graven images of the gods of Babylon.

10. "O thou my threshing, and the grain of my floor! that which I have heard from Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you."

One writer has well expressed the meaning of this verse as follows: "O thou, my people, who hast been afflicted and crushed; who hast been under my chastening hand, and reduced to these calamities on account of your sins; hear what God has spoken respecting the destruction of Babylon, and your consequent certain deliverance."

The downfall of Babylon was brought about through the power of God, and for the sake of His people.

The last part of the verse is as a seal, giving assurance doubly sure of the truth of the prophecy as having come direct from God, and declared in its fulness by the prophet.

Note, (1) "The church is God's floor . . . (2) True believers are the corn of God's floor . . . (3) The corn of God's floor must expect to be threshed by affliction and persecutions."⁵ (4) The threshers are under the power of God, Jehovah of hosts. (5) "But love takes part also in the work of threshing, and restrains the action of wrath."⁶

. Matthew Henry Commentary.
. Delitzsch.

The idea seems to be, "How much of the night of calamity has passed?"

Chap. 21:11-12. The Oracle Concerning Dumah.

According to some interpreters, Dumah in this obscure oracle refers to an Ishmaelite tribe in Arabia (Gen. 25:14), or a place belonging to that tribe located on the borders of Arabia and Syria in a rocky valley. Others consider the word an emblematical designation of Edom. The word "Dumah" means silence, and is suggestive of the solitude and desolation a store for Edom. Verse 11 gives the inquiry of the Edomite, and verse 12 the answer of the watchman.

21:11. "The burden of Dumah. One calleth unto me out of Seir, watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?"

For "burden" see note on 13:1. For Dumah see above.

"The Mount and the Land of Seir are alternative appellations of the mountainous tract which runs along the eastern side of the Arabah, occupied by the descendants of Esau, who succeeded the ancient Horites (Gen. 14:6; 36:20) 'cave-dwellers' in possession."¹ We are told that the Edomites as well as the Jews were under the subjection of Babylon. This oracle represents the inquiries from Edom as asking, "What from off the night? "How much of the night is passed?" Edom evidently thought her subjection was lasting a long time.

See Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11-12; Ob. 16:21.

12. "The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will inquire, inquire ye: turn ye, come."

Many interpreters consider the expression "The morning cometh" to refer to the prosperity coming to the Jews, and "the night" to the adversity to come upon the Edomites. In other words, "The Jews should be delivered from their captivity; not so the Edomites." There is a promised day of Israel. The remainder of the answer seems to leave it open for the Edomites to come again and make further inquiries. If they turn and come they may expect a more favorable answer. "The prophet has a comforting answer for them only if they return, come, i.e.. only if they come converted. So long as there is no change on them their future is enveloped in endless night."² "Inquire, return, come. Be inquisitive, be penitent, be willing and obedient."³ Is. 55:7; Acts 2:37-38.

Bible Encyclopedia. p. 2713.
Deltizsch.
Matthew Henry Commentary.

Chap. 21:13-17. The Oracle upon Arabia.

This brief oracle concerning North Arabian tribes gives us in verses 13-15 a picture of abnormal times when the caravans were insecure, of proverbial Arabian hospitality, and of the grievousness of war, which furnished a setting for the prophecy of verses 16-17 of the destruction of Arabian peoples.

21:13. "The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye edge, O ye caravans of Dedanites."

For "burden" see chap. 13:1.

Another reading of "In the forest in Arabia" is "In the thickets in the evening," hence this has been called "The Oracle at Evening, or in the Evening." In the Old Testament there are two men by the name of Dedan, one a descendant of Ham (Gen. 10:7), the other of Abraham by Keturah (Gen. 25:3). It may be from the latter that the Dedanites here mentioned were descended. They were travelling merchants (Ezek. 27:15, 16) whose dwelling was near Edom. Evidently because of the abnormal times these merchants had to flee from their regular route of travel into the thickets, or into the wilderness, where they were in need of food and water.

14. "Unto him that was thirsty they brought water; the inhabitants of the land of Tema did meet the fugitives with their bread."

Tema was "a tribe of Ishmaelites and the district they inhabited (Gen. 25:15; Is. 21:14). Their caravans were well-known. (Job 6:19)"¹

The Arabian tribes are noted for their hospitality. The writer personally saw an illustration of this in Palestine when passing an Arab tent near the sea of Galilee late in the afternoon, and pausing to see the family at their evening meal, our party of six was invited to share the meal with them.

15. "For they fled away from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war."

The grievousness of war was not only upon the Jews and the Edomites, but also upon these distant Arab tribes, causing them to be driven from their regular routes of travel, and to be destitute of the necessities of life.

16. "For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of a hireling, all the glory of Kedar shall fail;"

Kedar was a son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13). Later the word seemed to be applied to a tribe of Ishmaelite nomads, and here to the Arabian tribes in general.

For "years of a hireling" see note on 16:14. The prophecy of destruction within a definite time may have had as its purpose to warn to repentance.

"Here, as in chap. 17:3, glory comprehends all that constitutes the dignity or strength of a people."²

17. "And the residue of the number of the archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be few; for Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath spoken it."

Ishmael, the ancestor of these nomads was an archer (Gen. 21:20), and the bow was the main weapon of these Arabian tribes.

The skilled archers and mighty men to be left after the judgment? Jehovah comes upon Kedar shall be few in number. The glory of Kedar shall fail.

As this prophecy closes, its divine inspiration is once more emphatically declared.

This chapter considered as a whole gives us a wonderful revelation of God's "wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

 . Alexander.

Chap. 22:1-14. The Oracle Concerning the Valley of Vision.

This is the fourth in the general group of so-called "Watchman prophecies". The valley of vision refers to Jerusalem. "The mountains are round about Jerusalem" (Ps. 125:2). Jeremiah calls the city "the inhabitant of the valley" (Jer. 17:13). Then too, as it was here that many of the prophets received their visions, the place is appropriately called the valley of vision. This oracle shows "Jerusalem besieged, yet reckless." Many think that this prophecy belongs to the time of Sennacherib's invasion, 701 B.C. Others refer it also to the siege by Esarhaddon in the reign of Manasseh, or to that of Nebuchadnezzar.

Verses 1-4 tell of the commotion in the city and the lamentation of the prophet; verses 5-7 the day of visitation upon the city. Verses 8-11 describe the fortification of the city in preparation to withstand the enemy, and of the irreligion of the people. Verses 12-14 tell first of the exhilaration of the people instead of their humiliation before God, and of their consequent condemnation.

22:1. "The burden of the valley of vision. What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the house-tops?"

For "burden see chap. 13:1 and "valley of vision" see above. The flat-roofs of their houses were the places to which the people of Jerusalem rushed in times of excitement and commotion where they could look out and see what was going on in the city. The people running to the top of their houses gives a vivid picture of the general stir in Jerusalem.

2. "O thou that art full of shoutings, a tumultuous city, a joyous town; thy slain are not slain with the sword, neither are they lead in battle."

Older writers consider the first clause as describing consternation and alarm at the approach of the enemy. Later writers think it pictures the opposite condition of joyous excitement, frivolous gayety, and reckless indifference, described in verse 13, "self-confident rejoicing such as is described in Zeph. 2:15.

The last part of the verse may mean that famine and pestilence would destroy the people, -mortality due to sieges.

3. "All thy rulers fled away together, they were bound by the archers; all that were found of thee were bound together; they fled afar off."

This verse seems to apply better to the siege of Nebuchadnezzar than to that of Sennacherib. See II Kings 25:4-7; Jer. 39:4-7.

Alexander says, "It is best to give the verse its largest meaning as descriptive of the hardships and concomitant evils, not of one siege merely, but of sieges in general."

4. "Therefore said I, Look away from me, I will weep bitterly; labor not to comfort me for the destruction of the daughter of my people."

As the prophet sees the condition of his people and realizes what they are facing, sorrow and anguish take hold of him. His deep grief over and sympathy for his people would lead him to bitter lamentation. Compare Jer. 4:19; 9:1, and Jesus's lament over Jerusalem, Luke 19:41-44.

5. "For it is a day of discomfiture, and of treading down, and of perplexity, from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, in the valley of vision; breaking down of the walls, and a crying to the mountains."

There is here set forth the day of the visitation of God's judgment upon Jerusalem. Jehovah has a day, an appointed time for the manifestation of His power in judgment. It is a day of trouble (Is. 37:3), reading down (Is. 5:5), perplexity (Est. 3:15), breaking down (II Kings 5:10), and a crying, which "strikes on the mountains surrounding Jerusalem and returns as an echo."¹

6. "And Elam bare the quiver with chariots of men and horsemen; and Kir uncovered the shield."

Elam (see note on 21:2) and Kir, (perhaps people of Media) furnished help to the Assyrian army. The former were skilled in archery and may have used the bow both in chariots and on horseback. We are told that the Ethiopians alone excelled them in archery. The latter were prepared for battle with the removal of their shields from their cases.

7. "And it came to pass that thy choicest valleys were full of chariots, and the horsemen set themselves in array at the gate."

The valleys around the city which might have been filled with flocks, or fruit, or grain, the prophet pictures as filled with the chariots of the enemy, and at the very gates of the city the horsemen of the enemy firmly established.

8. "And he took away the covering of Judah; and thou didst look on that day to the armor in the house of the forest."

Compare verses 8-11 with II Chron. 32:1-5, 30. Interpreters differ in their explanation of the first clause. "The analogous expression is taking away the veil from the heart (II Chron. 3:15, 16), and the immediate mention of the measures used for the defence of the city, are perhaps decisive in favor of explaining the words to mean that the Jew's own eyes were opened."² Heretofore they were blinded to their danger but they now are aware of their defenselessness, and depend upon material preparation for defense.

The house of the forest was built by Solomon in Jerusalem, and was evidently used as an armory. (I Kings 7:2; 10:17) This may be referred to in Neh. 3:19.

9. "And ye saw the breaches of the city of David, that they were many; and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool;"

See II Kings 20:20 and II Chron. 32:1-6; 30.

To further fortify themselves against the enemy and prepare for a siege they took note of the defects in the walls of the city and in the water supply. The breaches of the city were probably not made by the enemy, but caused by decay and failure to repair. The measure of defense with reference to the waters was taken by Hezekiah, (II Chron. 32:4) and as probably been repeated frequently whenever Jerusalem was besieged.

10. "And ye numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and ye brake down the houses to fortify the wall;"

The numbering of the houses may have been to ascertain what ones could be used to furnish building materials for public use. Some was the material used for building at that time, as it is at the present time.

11. "Ye made also a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But ye looked not unto him that had done this, neither had ye respect unto him that purposed it long ago."

As a further means of self-defense a reservoir was made to receive the water of the old pool, which may mean the pool of Siloam. By this arrangement the water would be inaccessible to the besiegers, but available to the inhabitants of the city. Compare II Chron. 32:4, 30.

The last part of this verse tells of a colossal sin of the people. Their sin was not their diligence in preparation for self-defense, but their disregard for Jehovah. While they looked to the armor, and saw the breaches, they look not unto Jehovah, and regarded not Him. Is. 17:7; Jer. 1:1; II Chron. 16:7-9; Micah 7:7. Evidently Hezekiah himself trusted in Jehovah, II Kings 18:5 and II Chron. 32:8, but the unbelief of those associated with him was evident.

The Jewish writers upon this place, say, "There were seven things which God made before the world; meaning which he had in his eye when he made the world, the garden of Eden, the law, the just ones, Israel, the throne of glory, Jerusalem, and Messiah the Prince."³

12. "And in that day did the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth."

God's call through His providence, probably the siege just described, and through the words of the prophet, was to seriousness, humiliation, repentance. Jas. 4:8-10; Johah 3:6-10.

13. "And, behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Disobedience to the call of Jehovah is evidenced in an attempt to drown their sorrows by merriment, hilarity, revelry. Is. 5:12; Amos 6:6; Luke 17:26-29. The proverbial expression at the last of this verse, "Let us eat and drink, etc." is used as an argument by those who do not believe in the resurrection to try to justify their present life of recklessness, revelry, riot. See I Cor. 15:22. If there be no resurrection there might be some reason for the argument of the Epicurean.

14. "And Jehovah of hosts revealed himself in mine ears, Surely his iniquity shall not be forgiven you till ye die, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts."

This iniquity of course means the presumptuous contempt of God's messages and providential warnings, with which the people had been charged in the preceding verse. This offense is here treated as the iniquity against the Holy Ghost in the New Testament and is indeed very much of the same nature."⁴

"It shall never be expiated with sacrifice and offering, any more than the iniquity of the house of Eli, I Sam. 3:14. It is a sin against the remedy, a baffling of the utmost means of conviction, and rendering them ineffectual; and therefore it is not likely they should ever repent of it, or have it pardoned."⁵ See John 8:21-24 and Heb. 10:26-27.

What Will You Do in a Day of Discomfiture? Is 22:1-14 and Ps. 0:14-15.

- I. 1 Depend of Material Defense and Disregard Jehovah?
2. Disobey His call and Seek to Drown Sorrows by Dissipation? If so you will come to Destruction - Death.
- II. 1. Will you Offer your Heart unto Jehovah?
2. Will you give Him the Obedience of Your Life?
3. Will you offer up Timely Supplication?
4. If so you will have Deliverance - Glory.

 . Alexander.
 . Matthew Henry Commentary.

Chap. 22:15-25. Shebna and Eliakim, or The Ball and the Nail.

The first part of this chapter is directed against Jerusalem, the second part against an individual in Jerusalem, Shebna, a high official, who was replaced by Eliakim. Figuratively these men are compared to a ball and a nail.

The prophet is first instructed to denounce Shebna for his pride (verses 15-16). It may have been that he too, was leader of the party which favored alliance with Egypt, or Hezekiah's submission to Sennacherib. Then his degradation is foretold (verses 17-19). This is followed by the declaration that Eliakim will be elevated, empowered, and established in the place of Shebna (verses 20-24), and finally, there is foretold the fall of the nail (verse 25).

22:15. "Thus saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, Go get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, who is over the house, and say,"

Shebna's office was a very high one, probably like that of prime minister, or mayor of the palace. The Shebna mentioned in Isaiah 36:3 and 37:2 may have been the same man, who after his deposition as treasurer or steward, occupied the lower office of scribe. The prophet is here directed to go to Shebna with an unwelcome message.

16. "What doest thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out here a sepulchre on high, gravings a habitation for himself in the rock!"

The prophet may, or may not have met Shebna at the place where his sepulchre was being prepared. At any rate he severely rebukes him for such an act. It was the custom of kings and rich men to have sepulchres and monuments prepared. Absalom had his own monument prepared (II Sam. 18:18) and Joseph of Arimathea his tomb hewn in the rock. But why should Shebna, who was not of the royal family, and who was probably a foreigner, and did not have an estate or heritage in Judah, be so proud and high-minded as to want to be in the same class with the royal dead? II Chron. 2:33.

17. "Behold, Jehovah like a strong man, will hurl thee away violently; yea, he will wrap thee up closely."

first clause in Korean Bible.

The violent downfall of Shebna is here predicted. The last clause is difficult to explain. The Chaldee of it is "shall cover thee with confusion." A.R.V. margin has the reading "lay fast hold on thee."

18. "He will surely wind thee round and round, and toss thee like a ball into a large country; there shalt thou die, and there shall be the chariots of thy glory; thou shame of thy lord's house."

"Shebna becomes a clew, a ball, which is thrown into a land stretching far out on both sides, where with nothing to stop it, it flies farther and ever farther. Thither he goes to die, - the man who had degraded his own office and the Davidic court as well by an undue exercise and misuse of his power, and with him his splendid equipages."¹

19. "And I will thrust thee from thine office; and from thy station halt thou be pulled down."

Jehovah will depose him from his office. "For neither from the east, nor from the west, nor yet from the south, cometh lifting up. But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and lifteth up another." (Ps. 75:6-7). Compare Ezek. 17:24 and Luke 1:52.

20. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah:"

Shebna is to be replaced by Eliakim, whose name means, "God sets up." This name is found also in chap. 36:3, 11, 22. Eliakim was evidently a faithful follower of Jehovah. He is here called "my servant" in contrast to Shebna. Another contrast is that the name of his father is given, while no mention is made of the father of Shebna. "Hilkiah" means "Jehovah is my portion" or "Jehovah's portion." Some suggest that Shebna may have been a heathen put into office by Ahaz, and allowed to remain in office by Hezekiah.

21. "And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with my girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah."

Eliakim will be invested with the robes of the office by Jehovah, and also commit the government into his hand.

In contrast to Shebna Eliakim shall be a father to the people, a wise and benevolent ruler, counsellor and friend. This same word "father" is applied to Joseph in Egypt. (Gen 45:8) Compare the use of the word in Is. 9:6.

22. "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."

As Eliakim is elevated to his high office he not only is invested with the robe and girdle, but is empowered with chief authority by being given the key of the house of David, the symbol of unlimited control over the royal house and household. Jesus uses similar terms in speaking to Peter in Mt. 16:19, and in referring to himself in Rev. 3:7. Note that the key was to be placed not in the hand, but upon the shoulder of Eliakim. May not this be to suggest that it is a symbol not only of authority but also of responsibility? "The power of the keys consists not merely in supervision of the royal chambers, but also in the decision as to who was and who was not to be received into the king's service. Similarly in the New Testament the keys of the kingdom of heaven are handed over to Peter." 2

23. "And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall for a throne of glory to his father's house."

Eliakim will not only be elevated and empowered, having the robe, girdle and key, but he will also be firmly established in his office, as a nail in a sure place.

"Nail" is sometimes used to refer to large spikes or pins which were driven into the ground, to which were fastened, the cords of the tent, a tent-peg. Ezra 9:8. Again it is used to refer to the peg driven into the wall on which is hung clothes or vessels. Ezek. 15:3.

Jehovah's servant, Eliakim, will not only be a father to the people, and as a nail in a sure place, but he shall be also for a throne of glory to his father's house. He will bring honor to his family as Joseph did in Egypt. (Gen. 49:9-13)

24. "And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, from the cups even to all the lagnons."

Evidently the figure of the nail is continued in this verse. Eliakim, as a nail in a sure place will be the main support for his whole connection, all ranks of his father's house will be dependent upon him. He will not only bring honor to his family as suggested in verse 23b, but will bring help to them all, vs. 24. The history of Joseph in Egypt perhaps gives the best commentary on this verse also. See Gen. 47:11-25.

25. "In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, shall the nail that was fastened in a sure place give way; and it shall be hewn down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off; for Jehovah hath broken it."

Interpreters of this verse seem to be about evenly divided into two groups. The one group understands this verse to refer to Eliakim. "His family makes a wrong use of him," says Delitzsch, "and with an unwarrantable amount of good nature he makes a wrong use of his official position for their benefit. He therefore comes down head long, and with him all the heavy burden which the peg sustains, that is, all his relations, who, being far too eager to make the most of their good fortune, have brought him to ruin." The immediate connection favors this interpretation, speaking of Eliakim as it does as a nail in a sure place.

The other group of interpreters understands the verse to revert to Shebna, the prophet using the same figure of the nail to refer to Shebna, and the over burdened nail to represent the down fall of Shebna, together with all who had a dependence upon him. The thought of the paragraph at Eliakim was to be firmly established in the office, and that Shebna was to be removed seem to favor this second view.

Chap. 23. The Oracle Concerning Tyre.

Tyre, meaning "rock", was a Phoenician city of great antiquity, 20 miles south of Sidon, and about 35 miles north of Carmel. It was a double city, part on the mainland, and part on an island. It was noted for its commerce and its colonization. Its merchant-princes plied the Mediterranean from one end to the other, founded Carthage in North Africa, and colonized in Spain and in Cyprus. Its famous king, Hiram, was a friend of David and Solomon. The city was remarkable in history for its many sieges. One was by Shalmaneser about 724 B.C.; another under Nebuchadnezzar which lasted for 13 years, another by Alexander the Great, 332 B.C. Most writers refer the present chapter to the time of Nebuchadnezzar. On the other hand one writer says, "Most probably the prophecy before us is generic to the end of the destroying process, with particular allusions to particular sieges." Compare Ezek. 26+28.

This chapter tells of the ruin of Tyre (verse 1-14) and of the recovery of Tyre (verses 15-18).

The report of the ruin is made to the maritime merchants on the sea (vs. 1), to the coast people of Phoenicia (vs. 2-3) particularly to Sidon (vs. 4), these reports in the form of direct address; and it is foretold regarding the effect of the report to Egypt (Vs. 5).

Refuge in the colonial empire far distant is recommended. The reason for the ruin of Tyre in a word is that God resisteth the proud. The Ruler responsible for the ruin of Tyre is Jehovah of hosts. God also removes the restraint upon the colonies by the destruction of the mother city. The rod of His anger in the overthrow of Tyre is the Chaldeans (vs. 5-14).

In prophesying the recovery of Tyre (vs. 15-18) there is first foretold the rise after seventy years remaining in ruin (vs. 15), second, the restoration of commerce, (vs. 16-17) and third, the repentance of the citizens of Tyre, and the fruits of repentance (vs. 18).

23:1 "The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in; from the land of Kittim, it is revealed to them."

For "burden" see note on 13:1. For "ships of Tarshish" see note on 2:16.

Kittim probably refers to the whole island of Cyprus, or the city Kitium, in the south, a Phoenician colony. This was the last port of call of the homeward bound merchant vessels of Tyre. Here the mariners hear the news of the fall of their home city, which is now closed to them. Hence the reason for grief, lamentation.

2. "Be still, ye inhabitants of the coast, thou whom the merchants of Sidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished."

While verse one is addressed to those at sea, verse two is addressed to those at home, evidently to the coast people in Phoenicia, rather than to other coasts of the Mediterranean.

Sidon, meaning "a fishing station," was the mother city of Phoenicia, and the name was frequently applied to all of Phoenicia.

Formerly there was the noise and bustle of big business, now, the people are to be still, stricken, dumb, as it were, in face of the overthrow of the city, and the paralysis of its trade.

3. "And on great waters the seed of Shihor, the harvest of the Nile was her revenue; and she was the mart of the nations."

Shihor, meaning "dark-colored", was a name of the Nile river. See Jer. 2:18. Egypt was a great country for the production of grain. Gen. 2:1-2.

Tyre not only received replenishment from the more ancient Phoenician city of Sidon, but received revenue from Egypt, "the granary of the ancient world."

Tyre became not only a rendezvous for merchants, an international commercial center, a mart of nations, but a "gain", as some prefer to translate it, "a means of gain, a source of profit and subsistence for any entire peoples."

4. "Be thou ashamed, O Sidon; for the sea hath spoken, the strong-hold of the sea, saying, I have not travailed, nor brought forth, neither have I nourished young men, nor brought up virgins."

Sidon, the mother city of Phoenicia, is called upon to be ashamed in view of the wretchedness of her daughter Tyre. Not only does this verse contain an apostrophe, but also personification.

The sea is represented as speaking, and in particular the strong-hold of the sea, referring probably to the insular city of Tyre. This city is represented as a mother without children. No longer was Tyre founding colonies and carrying on a flourishing trade with the nations.

"Sidon the ancestress of Canaan, must bear what cannot but cover her with shame, the lament of her own daughter Tyre, that robbed as she is of her children, she is like a barren woman. Because her young men and virgins have been done to death by war, she is in the very same case as if she had never brought forth or reared them."1

5. "When the report cometh to Egypt, they shall be sorely pained at the report of Tyre."

The Egyptians would be sorely pained at the report of the fall of Tyre, because of the disastrous effect it would have upon the Egyptian prosperity, or because the enemy who conquered Tyre might come on in victorious march to Egypt. "When the Egyptians shall hear that so powerful a neighboring nation has been destroyed, they must know their own day is near."2

6. "Pass ye over to Tarshish; wail ye inhabitants of the coast."

The people of Tyre are advised to take refuge in their colonies. We are told that many of the people of Tyre fled to Carthage and elsewhere among their colonies, both when their city was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, and when it was besieged by Alexander the Great. Tarshish was their far distant colony, probably Tartessus, a city in Spain.

7. "Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days, whose feet carried her afar off to sojourn?"

The sorrowful city that has fallen is contrasted to the joyous city of the past. Tyre was a city of great antiquity, a fortified city in the time of Joshua (Joshua 19:29).

Many interpret the last clause as future referring to the flight or the carrying into exile of the people of Tyre. Probably a more correct interpretation is to refer it to the long itineraries taken by the busy merchants of Tyre.

8. "Who hath purposed this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth?"

Tyre had an enviable reputation in the political and business world. She had set up kings in her colonies, her merchants were princes, perhaps meaning that they lived like princes, and her traffickers (literally anaanites) were of high reputation. What is the reason for the ruin of a city of such reputation? Who hath purposed this against Tyre? Whose royal decree is responsible for the ruin of Tyre?

9. "Jehovah of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth."

This answers the question of verse 8. ²⁷ Jehovah of hosts hath purposed to profane the pride of Tyre. Is. 14:24; 46:10-11; Acts 4:28; Eph. 1:11; 1:11; Dan. 4:37; I Cor. 1:26-29; Jas. 4:6. "God resisteth the proud."

10. "Pass through the land as the Nile, O daughter of Tarshish; there is no restraint any more."

The last clause "may be taken in opposite senses, as denoting the failure of strength and general dissolution, or the absence of restraint and freedom from oppression."³ Removal of the girdle refers to weakness as Job 12:21. Compare Ps. 18:32. The second view is that the colonies released from all restraint, by the fall of Tyre, throw off allegiance. The girdle is the supremacy of Tyre, which has hitherto restrained all independent action of the part of the colony."⁴

11. "He hath stretched out his hand over the sea, he hath shaken the kingdoms; Jehovah hath given commandment concerning Canaan, to destroy the strongholds thereof."

"Jehovah has stretched out His hand over the sea (Ex. 14:21), in and which Tyre and its colonies lie; He has thrown into a state of anxious

excitement the countries of anterior Asia and the Egypto-Ethiopian^s quarter, and with regard to Canaan has commissioned instruments of destruction. The Phoenicians themselves called their country Canaan, but in the Old Testament the name occurs in this most restricted application only here."⁵

12. "And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin daughter of Sidon; arise, pass over to Kittim; even there shalt thou have no rest."

Virgin daughter of Sidon probably refers to the people of Phoenicia in general, as does the word "Canaan" in the above verse. Oppressed virgin daughter of Sidon refers to the people as overpowered by the enemy. Previously they were a joyous people, but the immediate future contains sorrow for them, for the purpose of judgment of Jehovah shall stand.

The exhortation, "Arise, pass over to Kittim" has a force similar to the similar injunction in verse six. Refuge in the colony is advised, yet even so that will not mean rest. Even there they will not be free from disturbance, a sad plight is here pictured to the Phoenicians.

13. "Behold, the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not; the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness; they set up their towers; they overthrew the palaces thereof; they made it a ruin."

This verse is commonly understood to mean that the Chaldeans were God's instrument in the ruin of Tyre. "As the destroyers of the palaces of Tyre he names the Chaldeans - this people which hitherto, notwithstanding its great antiquity (Jer. 5:15), has not distinguished itself as a conqueror of the world (f. Hab. 1:6), but was subject to the Assyrians, which now, however, after it has destroyed Assyria, i.e. Nineveh, has risen to power."⁶

Chaldea was the native country of Abraham (Gen. 11:31). The Chaldeans were the predatory people who attacked Job (Job 1:17). "Among the four great kingdoms or empires on the Euphrates, secular historians place the Chaldean as the first in order or earliest, lasting about ten centuries, from B.C. 2300 to about B.C. 1200; the Assyrian empire next, lasting about six and a half centuries, from B.C. 1270 to B.C. 625; the Babylonian empire third in order, continuing from about B.C. 625 to B.C. 538; and the Medo-Persian fourth. After their subjugation, in B.C. 1300, they (the Chaldeans) held an insignificant place in history for over six centuries, but recovered themselves in B.C. 625, and established a new kingdom known as the Babylonian Empire."⁷

14. "Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for your stronghold is laid waste."

Here is a repetition of the call to lamentation and the reason therefor similar to that found at the beginning of the prophecy. The stronghold is evidently the same as is mentioned in verse four, namely, insular Tyre.

15. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years it shall be unto Tyre as in the song of the harlot."

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- . Ibid.
 - . Ibid.
 - . Shaff's Bible Dictionary.

The prophecy of the recovery of Tyre is prefaced by a prediction that it will remain in ruins or obscurity, or without its commerce for seventy years, according to the days of one king. One king, probably refers to one kingdom or dynasty (see Dan. 7:17, and 8:20) and that the Babylonian monarchy. When Babylon was taken by Cyrus, the nations conquered by Nebuchadnezzar were given their liberty.

The rise of Tyre to commercial prosperity after the period of obscurity is foretold under the figure of the song of the harlot. "It shall be to Tyre as the song of the harlot, namely, a harlot that has been forgotten, but who attracts notice again by her song."⁸

16. "Take a harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered."

It is thought by many that these are the words of the song of the harlot. The force of the comparison is that just as the forgotten harlot seeks to attract attention and win admirers for herself, so would the city of Tyre that had been for a long period, unnoticed in the world of commerce, exert herself to recover her lost trade, soliciting notice and patronage of the merchants of the world.

17. "And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that Jehovah will visit Tyre, and she shall return to her hire, and shall lay the harlot with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth."

This figure is generally understood as predicting the restoration of "commercial intercourse without necessarily implying guilt. -- Certain it is that the Scriptures more than once compare the mutual solicitations of commercial enterprise to illicit love. That the comparison does not necessarily involve the idea of unlawful or dishonest trade, is sufficiently apparent from the following verse."⁹

The restoration of Tyre's commercial importance is here attributed to the favor of Jehovah. Without the favor of His providence men may build but God will throw down. (See Mal. 1:4).

"Tyre shall now by degrees come to be the mart of nations again; she shall return to her hire, to her traffic, and shall commit fornication; she shall have dealings in trade (for she carries on the similitude of a harlot) with all the kingdoms of the world, that she had formerly reaped with in her prosperity. The love of worldly wealth is a spiritual leprosy, and therefore covetous people are called adulterers and adulteresses (Jas. 4:4) and covetousness is spiritual idolatry."¹⁰

18. "And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to Jehovah; she shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before Jehovah, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing."

In the previous verse is foretold the restoration of commercial prosperity, due to the goodness of God. This verse looks still farther into

Fausset.

Alexander.

Matthew Henry Commentary.

the future with a more glorious prophecy of their return to Jehovah in repentance due to God's grace evidenced by the consecration of their commercial gains unto Jehovah. The Psalmist joins in similar prophecy. See Ps. 45:12; 72:10; 87:4. This was partly fulfilled in the time of Christ. Mt. 15:21-28; Mark 3:8; and of Paul, Acts 21:3-6, and of Jerome who said, "We have seen churches built to the Lord in Tyre; we have beheld the wealth of all, which was not treasured up nor hid, but which was given to those who dwelt before the Lord." Compare Mt. 6:19-21.

As we reach the last verse of this prophecy on the ruin and recovery of Tyre we are reminded of the words of Paul, "But where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly." (Rom. 5:20b).

Chaps. 24-27. World-wide Judgment issuing in Israel's Redemption.

"The third great section of the Book of Isaiah embraces chapters 24-27, which tell of Jehovah's world judgment, issuing in the Redemption of Israel. . . The prophet's fundamental stand-point in chapters 24-27 is the same as that of 2:2-4 and chapters 13-23. Yet the prophet not infrequently throws himself forward into the remote future, oscillating backward and forward between his own times and those of Israel's restoration." 1

"Chapters 24-27 are the finale to chapters 13-23, and that in the strictest sense of the word: This concluding cycle performs the same function as the finale in musical composition, - it gathers into one grand impressive whole the previously scattered themes. . . This entire finale is a great Hallelujah to chapters 13-23, hymnlike in content, musical in form." 2

Chap. 24. Here is a description of the confusion, chaos and calamities in the earth. Verses 1-12. Yet in the midst of it all there is a chorus of praise from the remnant (13-16). This is followed by a continuation of the picture of judgment (vss 16-20). The climax of the chapter tells of the conquering presence of Jehovah (vss 21-23).

Chap. 25. If judgment is prominent in chap. 24, thanksgiving and praise are emphasized in chap. 25. Here are presented first, thanksgiving in view of the destruction of the enemy, and the deliverance of God's people (vss 1-5). Second, there is a glorious prediction of the triumphs in Zion, bringing bountiful blessings (vss 6-8) and third is expressed thankful trust in view of the treading down of Moab, the enemy of Israel.

Chap. 26. The chorus continues, with trust in Jehovah being particularly expressed. The chapter opens by foretelling praise to Jehovah and an exhortation to trust in Him and the reasons therefor (vss 1-6). The prophecy continues somewhat in the form of a meditation on the ways of Jehovah (vss 7-10). Then the spirit of prayer so evident all thru the chapter gives further expression to the prayer of confidence and hope in Jehovah (11-19). The concluding verses are in the form of a call to the people to a waiting in private, patient expectation and hope (vss 20-21).

Chap. 27. Two leading ideas in this chapter are Judgment and Salvation, an alternation between the two in the so-called pendulum movement so characteristic of certain sections of Isaiah's prophecy.

First, with vivid figures of speech Jehovah's vengeance upon His enemies is foretold (vs 1). Then comes the song of Jehovah's vineyard which will be protected from invasion, with Jehovah as its Keeper (vss 2-6).

The following paragraph presents Jehovah's visitation in mercy and in judgment (vss 7-11). Finally is foretold the salvation of the Jews scattered abroad, through their being ingathered by Jehovah, and their worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem. (vss 12-13).

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1. George L. Robinson.
 2. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

Chap. 24:1. "Behold, Jehovah maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof."

The opening verse may be considered as a theme verse of which the following verses are expansions and illustrations. The verse "is expressive and thorough; the words are those which were used for cleaning a dirty dish."³ The "earth" is here evidently not limited to Judah or the land of Palestine. (See verse four where the word "world" is used). "With the very first verse the prophecy leaps far beyond all particular or national conditions."⁴ No doubt the prophet had Judah particularly in mind as he was especially sent to the Jews but his view seems to extend to the neighborhood of nations as in chapters 13-23. See Is. 1:7-9; 6:11, 12. Jehovah perverteth the face of the earth, upturning it, scouring it, and scattering abroad its inhabitants. Compare II Kings 21:13; Deut. 28:64; Zech. 13:7-9; Jas. 1:1.

2. "And it shall be as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the creditor, so with the debtor; as with the taker of interest, so with the giver of interest to him."

All ranks and classes and conditions of people shall share alike in the calamities of Jehovah's judgment. There is no distinction because of rank or riches. Dan. 9:5-8. "It means that all would be involved in the same calamity, and there would be no favored class that would escape."⁵

3. "The earth shall be utterly emptied, and utterly laid waste; for Jehovah hath spoken this word."

The thoroughness of the judgment, and the absolute certainty of its accomplishment are here set forth. Compare Is. 6:11-12; Lev. 26:30-35.

4. "The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the lofty people of the earth do languish."

"Earth" and "world" are parallel expressions here as in chap. 26:9. Alexander says, "'Earth' and 'world' are not to be taken in their widest sense, but as poetical descriptions of the country." The desolation foretold in verse one is here further described. It is like a flower that fades and languishes, and in it are included the high ones of the people. Is. 2:11-12.

5. "The earth also is polluted under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant."

The earth is polluted or profaned because of the sin of man. Matter in itself is not evil, but the effect of sin on the material universe has been marked since the sin of our first parents. See Gen. 3:17-18. The ground was cursed for man's sake. Compare Gen. 6:11-13; Lev. 18:

3. G. A. Smith.

4. G. A. Smith.

5. Barnes.

24-28; Ps. 106:36-39; Rom. 8:20-21. Man's disobedience to the will of God is expressed in the second part of the verse. Compare Is. 1:2-5; 59:1-3, 12-15; II Kings 17:7-23; Dan. 9:5-10. For the expression "everlasting covenant" compare Gen. 9:16; Gen. 17:13-14; II Sam. 23:5; Ps. 105:10; Heb. 13:20. Some consider the allusion here is to Gen. 9:16.

6. "Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are found guilty: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left."

The curse because of man's transgressions is described in its effect upon the earth and its inhabitants. Dan. 9:11. The curse devours and burns. Is. 1:31; 5:24; 9:19; 10:22.

7. "The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh."

Barnes suggests that the new wine mourns because there are none to drink it, and the vine languishes because there are none to cultivate it. Instead of laughter is sighing.

8. "The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, and the joy of the harp ceaseth."

Not only the mirth of their drinking, but also the mirth of their accompanying music ceases. Compare Is. 5:11-14.

9. "They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it."

They shall no longer find pleasure in drinking wine, and shall lose their taste for strong drink.

10. "The waste city is broken down; every house is shut up, that no man may come in."

"The world and its pleasure are judged, judged also the city of the world, where the world's power and pleasure were concentrated."⁶ Some think the city of Jerusalem is referred to particularly, others that the word refers to cities in general. The city will suffer desolation, confusion, destruction.

11. "There is a crying in the streets because of the wine; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone."

There is lamentation, lack of wine, lack of light, lack of laughter in the land. Compare Hos. 7:14; Jer. 14:2; Is. 32:13.

12. "In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction."

In the place of the joy in the city there is desolation, and in the place of glory is destruction. "'Gates' can be used figuratively for the glory of a city (Is. 3:26; 14:31; Jer. 14:2; Lam. 1:4; contrast Ps. 87:2), but whether the military force, the rulers or the people is in mind cannot be determined."

6. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

7. Burton Scott Easton.

13. "For thus shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples as the shaking of an olive-tree, as the gleanings when the vintage is done."

At this verse the pendulum begins to swing back from the picture of chaos and confusion with its curse and its cause, towards the chorus of praise from the remnant. There is first foretold the glorious fact that there will be a remnant in the midst of the desolation of the earth, the same figure of speech being used as in chapter 17:6.

For doctrine of the remnant see also Isaiah 1:9; 6:13; 10:20-22; Rom. 11:2-6.

14. "These shall lift up their voice, they shall shout; for the majesty of Jehovah they cry aloud from the sea."

"These" is emphatic, referring to the remnant of the preceding verse.

Over against the sorrow of the preceding verses, there is here foretold the shouting for joy, as the pendulum swings back striking the chord sounded thru the prophecy of Isaiah. The joy of the redeemed because of the majesty of Jehovah will be expressed in shouting and crying aloud. Compare chap. 12:1-6; 25:1; 26:1; 27:2; 35:2, 10; 40:9; 42:10-12; 44:23; 51:11; 52:7-9; 54:1; Hab. 3:16-18. "The reason and matter of rejoicing is the majesty of Jehovah, that is, that Jehovah has shown Himself so majestic in judgment and mercy (12:5-6), and is now so manifest in His exaltedness (2:11, 17). Therefore the sound of rejoicing comes from the Mediterranean (from the sea), by which the land where Jehovah's community dwelt is washed."

15. "Wherefore glorify ye Jehovah in the east, even the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the isles of the sea."

The word "east" is also translated "lights" or "fires". Taking the last as the most correct reading some suggest that the expression refers to the glorifying of Jehovah in the fires of affliction, as did the three Hebrew children (Dan.3). The first translation, "east", probably has more in its favor, meaning "the region of sunrise or of dawning light in opposition to the sea or west."

This second interpretation makes the verse closely parallel to Mal. 1:11a "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles."

16. "From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs; Glory to the righteous."

"But I said, I pine away, I pine away, woe is me! the treacherous have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous have dealt very treacherously."

World-wide praise to Jehovah is heard, the substance of the grand chorus, being "Glory to the righteous". Ps. 2:8; 22:27-31; 67:7; 72:8-11.

Many interpreters agreeing with Calvin consider the word "righteous" as referring to God, the Righteous One. Rev. 15:3; 16:5-7; 19:1-6. Others agree with Delitzsch in thinking it refers to righteous people in general. Is. 3:10; 60:21.

In the midst of this verse the pendulum swings back from the chorus of praise from the remnant to the cry of pain from the prophet, as he takes up again the subject of the judgment upon the earth because of sin. "The word implying treachery (722) is repeated no less than five times in various forms in this single clause, and shows how strongly the idea had taken possession of the mind of the prophet." ⁹ Hos. 6:7.

17. "Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth."

Similar words are found in Jer. 48:43 with reference to Moab. Fear, pit, and snare are hunting terms. Wild animals were frightened into holes or pitfalls, or into a gin or net. Compare Isaiah 8:14.

18. "And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble."

The first part of this verse explains the preceding verse. "The sense is that they were nowhere safe; that if they escaped one danger, they immediately fell into another." ¹⁰ Amos. 5:19 presents a similar thought, "He who shall flee through dread of a lion shall meet a bear; and if he go into the house, when he leaneth on a wall, a serpent shall bite him." See also Joshua 10:10-11; I Kings 20:29-30; Job 18:8-16.

In predicting the calamities of the judgment to come, first the figure taken from the art of hunting is used. In the second part of the verse the first reference is evidently to a deluge, and the second to an earthquake, thus making a cumulative description of the calamities, coming from above, and from below, and from all sides. See Gen. 7:11 and Ps. 46:2-3.

19. "The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent assunder, the earth is shaken violently."

The original language here is very emphatic. "By breaking, the land is broken; by scattering, the land is scattered; by commotion, the land is moved."

The earth first of all gets fractured, ¹¹ then yawning chasms open, once more it sways to and fro, and falls." Compare Num. 16:31-32 and Deut. 11:6; Is. 34:4-10; Rev. 20:11.

20. "The earth shall stagger like a drunken man, and shall sway to and fro like a hammock; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again."

9. Barnes.

10. Ibid.

11. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

Here is the climax of the description of the earthquake using the figure of a drunken man, and a swinging hammock. And the cause of the calamities upon the earth and the consequence are given in the last part of the verse. Sin is a burden upon the earth. (See note at close of chapter one.) "Sin is a burden to the whole creation; it is a heavy burden under which it groans now, and will sink at last. Sin is the ruin of states, and kingdoms, and families; they fall under the weight of that talent of lead, Zech. 5:7-8." ¹²

21. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth."

There are two prevalent interpretations of the first part of this verse, one is that it refers to earthly powers, the other that it refers to the host of heaven. Alexander, favoring the former view points out that "high" is a relative expression and although applied to heaven in verse 18, is applied to earth or to human society in verse 4. "The sense may simply be that God will judge the high or lofty host, namely, the kings of the land upon the land." Calvin takes a similar view, considering the first part of the verse a metaphor which is explained in direct language in the second part of the verse.

The other view which considers the reference to the host of heaven explains it as "either the visible host of heaven (the present economy of nature, affected by the sun, moon, and stars, the objects of idolatry, being abolished, ch. 65:17; 60:19, simultaneously with the corrupt polity of men); or rather, the invisible rulers of the darkness of this world, as the antithesis to 'kings of the earth' shows. Angels moreover preside as it were, over kingdoms of the world. (Dan. 10:13, 20, 21)" ¹³ Is. 34:2; Rev. 17:14.

22. "And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison; and after many days shall they be visited."

"The sense of the first clause evidently is that they shall be imprisoned. The persons meant are the principalities and powers of the verse preceding. There are two interpretations of the verb 'visited'. According to one it means 'they shall be punished, or at least brought forth to judgment'. The other is, 'they shall be visited in mercy'". ¹⁴ Compare Josh. 10:16-27; Jer. 38:6-13; 52:31-34; Zech. 9:11-12; II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6.

23. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed; for Jehovah of hosts will reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem; and before his elders shall be glory."

"The glory of the Creator infinitely outshines the glory of the brightest creatures." ¹⁵ Is. 60:19-20; Joel 2:31; Mark 13:24-26; Rev. 21:23; 22:5.

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- 12. Matthew Henry Commentary.
 - 13. J.F. and Brown Commentary.
 - 14. Alexander on Isaiah.
 - 15. Matthew Henry Commentary.

"When the Lord shall visit his people, and cleanse the Church from its defilement, he will establish a kingdom so illustrious that it will darken the sun and stars by its brightness. " 16

Barnes suggests that "the heavenly bodies are often employed in the sacred writings to denote the princes and kings of the earth." With this view in mind he says, "It may be added that when Jehovah, by the Messiah, shall reign over all the earth, all the glory of princes and monarch's shall be dimmed; the celebrity of their wisdom and power and plans shall be obscured in the superior splendor of the wisdom of God, in reigning through his Son over the human race. Come that blessed day and speedily let the glory of the moon be confounded, and the sun be ashamed, and all inferior magnificence fade away before the splendor of the Sun of Righteousness!"

16. Calvin.

Chap. 25. (See Introduction to this section). Dr. Delitzsch calls chapters 25-26 "The Fourfold Hymnic Echo". The first echo: salvation of the peoples after the fall of the world, chap. 25:1-8; the second echo: the abasement of Moab, 25:9-12.

25:1. "O Jehovah, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things, even counsels of old, in faithfulness and truth."

The prophecy of the glorious Kingdom of Jehovah made in chap. 24:23 prepares the way for the praise of Jehovah in this chapter. Here is taken up the note sounded by David in I Chron. 29:10-20 and in the 119 Psalms such as Ps. 118:28; 145:1, and is heard again in Rev. 5:9-14.

Reason for praise is expressed in the second part of the verse. Jehovah has done wonderful things, (Ps. 78:4; 98:1; Rev. 15:1) even counsels of old (Is. 22:11; 37:26; 46:10; 28:29).

Faithfulness and truth characterize the living Jesus (Rev. 3:14; 19:11). The word in the Hebrew for "truth" is "Amen", "let it be". "The word denotes that the purposes of God were firm, and would certainly be fulfilled."¹

2. "For thou hast made of a city a heap, of a fortified city a ruin, a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built."

This verse may refer, by way of anticipation, to the literal fall of Babylon (Is. 21:9), or it may be applied more remotely to the fall of the city of the world-empire, which is figuratively represented in Revelation by Babylon (Rev. 18:2,3,19). "For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after a city which is to come." (Heb. 13:14).

3. "Therefore shall a strong people glorify thee; a city of terrible nations shall fear thee."

"The destruction of Babylon, and the fulfillment of prophecy thereby, shall lead even the boldest and wildest of the heathen to acknowledge Jehovah as the true God."²

The effect of God's judgment is to cause heathen peoples to glorify Him, and to fear Him. Is. 24:15; Ps. 72:8-11; Ezek. 38:23; Ezek. 39:21-22; Zech. 14:9; Rev. 11:15. Compare in particular the Song of Moses and the Lamb. Rev. 15:3-4.

4. "For thou hast been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."

Here we are told something of the kind of God we have in Jehovah; the kind of people who enjoy His favor, and the kind of enemy we have. Jehovah is a stronghold, (Is. 17:10; 27:5; Ps. 28:8) a refuge (Is. 4:5-6; 14:32; Ps. 46:1), a shade (Ps. 121:5-8). The poor and needy may

1. Barnes.

2. Alexander on Isaiah.

6. And in this mountain will Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of Jehovah of hosts, of wine
look to Him and find help. (Is. 11:4; 29:19; 66:2; Ps. 12:5; 35:10; 72:4,13; Zeph. 3:12; Jas. 2:5). Our enemies are terrible and violent like a storm against a wall (Mt. 7:25-27), but are broken by the strength of Jehovah. (Is. 29:5, 20; 49:25).

5. "As the heat in a dry place wilt thou bring down the noise of strangers; as the heat by the shade of a cloud, the song of the terrible ones shall be brought low."

"The sufferings of Israel under oppression shall be mitigated and relieved as easily and quietly as the intense heat of the sun by an intervening cloud. The noise mentioned in the first clause is probably the tumult of battle and conquest, and the song in the last clause the triumphal song of the victorious enemy." ³

Verses 6-8 give a glorious picture of the bountiful blessings of Zion, the plenteous grace of the Gospel Church. Verse six sets forth the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom under the emblem of a feast, giving the place, the Preparer, the people to be present, and the provision made. The place is Mount Zion, Ps. 78:68; Is. 4:1-2; Heb. 12:22, so often emblematical of the Church. The Preparer is Jehovah of Hosts (Mt. 22:1-10; Luk 14:16-23) who will also be present to preside. The people are from all nations (Dan. 7:14, Mark 16:15). The provision is plenteous grace. Ps. 23:5; 36:8; 63:5; Rev. 19:9.

7. "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that covereth all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations."

Not only will Jehovah make a feast in Zion for His people, but He will also remove their spiritual blindness and sorrow. "The influence to go forth from this centre shall dispel the darkness, both of ignorance and sorrow, which now broods over the world. -- Most interpreters suppose an allusion to the practice of veiling the face as a sign of mourning, which agrees well with the next verse and is no doubt included, but the words seem also to express the idea of a veil upon the understanding. (See above, ch. 22:8)" ⁴ Is. 60:1-3; II Cor. 3:15-16; Eph. 4:18; 5:8; John 8:12.

8. "He hath swallowed up death forever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people will he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it."

Not only will Jehovah remove darkness, but also death, not only sorrow, but also shame.

He hath swallowed up death victoriously. Here is a foreshadowing of the doctrine of the resurrection. See Hos. 13:14; I Cor. 15:26, 54; II Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14-15; Rev. 20:14. Not only Divine power and love are manifested in the removal of darkness and death, but also Divine tenderness and love in the removal of sorrow and shame. "When Jehovah

3. Alexander on Isaiah.

4. Ibid.

removes the veil he sees the tears and wipes them away." 5 Rev. 7:17; 21:4. Jesus "Carried our sorrows" (Is. 53:4) "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). See also Mt. 5:11-12; Heb. 11:26; I Pet. 4:14. Jesus will dispel darkness, death, dishonor.

9. "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Verses 9-12 express thankful trust in view of the treading down of Moab, the enemy of Israel.

The object of praise is God, Jehovah, (Is. 40:9; 52:10), the source of Salvation (Is. 35:4). "We have waited long, but he is come at last, to vindicate his truth and our reliance upon him." 6

"waited is characteristic of God's people in all ages. (Gen. 49:18; Titus 2:13)" 7 Ps. 27:14; 37:5-7; Luke 2:25, 28-30.

This song of praise is characterized by faith, patience, joy. Compare chap. 12.

10. "For in this mountain will the hand of Jehovah rest; and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, even as straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill."

In Mt. Zion, emblematical of the Church of God, will the protecting hand of Jehovah rest. Ps. 132:13-14; Ezek. 48:35; Zeph. 3:15-17. While Israel will be protected Moab, the enemy of God's people will be subjugated, degraded, destroyed. Is. 11:14; chaps. 15 and 16; Num. 24:17; Zeph. 2:9.

11. "And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst thereof, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim; but Jehovah will lay low his pride together with the craft of his hands."

Interpreters differ in their understanding of the metaphor in the first part of this verse. Calvin and Matthew Henry think the swimmer is God, whose hands strike down the foe on each side with the ease of a swimmer in his strokes thru the water. Others such as Alexander and Delitzsch, think the swimmer is Moab itself, struggling in vain to save itself from the manure-pond into which it had been trampled down like straw in the water of the dunghill. "Theowntrodden straw now becomes a living person, and struggles in the filthy pool to save himself from drowning, but in vain." 8 Jehovah will bring low the pride of Moab. Is. 16:6, 14; Jer. 48:29, 42; Dan. 4:37; Jas. 4:6.

12. "And the high fortress of thy walls hath he brought down, laid low, and brought to the ground, even to the dust."

Moab was proud of her fortifications. Here it is emphatically stated that these fortifications will be completely destroyed.

5. Duhm.

6. Alexander on Isaiah.

7. J. F. and Brown Commentary.

8. Alexander on Isaiah.

"The destruction of Moab is typical of Christ's victory over death (spoken of verse 8), his spoiling principalities and powers in his cross (Col. 2:15), his pulling down Satan's strongholds by the preaching of his gospel (II Cor. 10:4), and his reigning till all his enemies be made his footstool, Ps. 110:1" ⁹

Chap. 26. (See Introduction to this section). "Third echo: Israel as restored, or raised to life again. chaps. 26-27:1."

26:1. "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city: salvation will he appoint for walls and bulwarks."

In the day of deliverance promised to Israel this song of praise shall be sung. The spirit of the song is like that of Miriam (Ex. 15), Deborah (Judges 5), and David (II Sam. 22). Jerusalem, emblematical of the Church of God, is as an impregnable city. Its strength is not material, but spiritual, namely, salvation from Jehovah. Is. 60:18; Zech. 2:5; Mt. 16:18.

2. "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth faith may enter in."

This seems to represent the people returning from captivity to the gates of Jerusalem and addressing those who kept the gates. Is. 60:11; Ps. 118:19-20; Rev. 21:24; 22:14.

The captivity was a time of chastening and purifying of the Jews, and the nation returning had not apostatized. Through grace they had become righteous, having kept the faith. Is. 60:21; I Pet. 3:9; Jude 3.

3. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee."

This is a prayer in which a general and glorious truth is expressed, namely, that God is the Giver of perfect peace to the steadfast mind who trusts in Him. This peace comes from the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6-7; Micah 5:5; John 14:27; 16:33). It is not given to the wicked, but to the true believer (Is. 57:19-21; Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7). The price of peace was paid at the cross. Eph. 2:13-17; Col. 1:20.

4. "Trust ye in Jehovah forever; for in Jehovah, even Jehovah, is an everlasting rock."

This is an exhortation to remain steadfast, continually trusting in Jehovah, with the reason therefor, namely, that Jehovah is a rock of ages. Compare Ps. 55:22; 62:8; Prov. 3:5-6; Ps. 62:11; 125:1; Mt. 28:18; Phil. 4:13; I Sam. 2:2.

"The figurative name rock, as applied to God, includes the two ideas of a hiding place and a foundation, or the one complex idea of a permanent asylum." ¹⁰

5. "For he hath brought down them that dwell on high, the lofty city: he layeth it low, he layeth it low even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust."

Further reason for trust in Jehovah is the exercise of His power in the destruction of Israel's enemy. Compare Is. 2:12 and 25:12. The lofty city may refer to the imperial city of Babylon.

6. "The foot shall tread it down; even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy."

The poor and needy of God's people are used of Him in the abasement of the enemy. Is. 60:14. Not only the proud shall be abased, but the humble shall be exalted. Dan. 7:27; Mal. 4:3; Luke 1:51-53; Rom. 16:20; Jas. 2:5.

7. "The way of the just is uprightness: thou that art upright dost direct the path of the just."

Verses 7-10 are in the form of a meditation on the ways of Jehovah in dealing with his people.

Jehovah directs the way of the righteous causing it to prosper; he makes level the path of the just. "For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous" (Ps. 1:6a). Compare Eph. 2:10; I John 3:10; Jer. 10:23; Is. 42:16; Ps. 27:11.

8. "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Jehovah, have we waited, for thee; to thy name, even to thy memorial name, is the desire of our soul."

"For this manifestation of thy righteousness and goodness we have long been waiting in the way of thy judgments, that is, to see thee come forth as judge, for the vindication of thy people and the destruction of their enemies." 11

"'Name' and 'memorial' are synonymous, as in Ex. 3:15; Ps. 135:13; Jehovah's memorial is that by which He makes Himself to be remembered (see v. 13)." 12

9. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee earnestly; for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness."

The context favors the interpretation given by Alexander that there is here expressed a special desire that Jehovah would manifest His righteousness by appearing as a judge, this desire being felt constantly. "By judgments, here as in the foregoing context, we can only understand judicial providences. The doctrine of the verse is, that a view of God's severity is necessary to convince men of his justice." 13 Compare the first half of the verse with Ps. 63:5-6; 130:6; Luke 6:12; Is. 55:6; Ps. 63:1; Mt. 6:33.

10. "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal wrongfully, and will not behold the majesty of Jehovah."

11. Alexander on Isaiah.

12. Cambridge Bible.

13. Alexander on Isaiah.

"The reasoning of the preceding verse is here continued. As it was there said that God's judgments were necessary to teach men righteousness, so it is here said that continued prosperity is insufficient for that purpose. The wicked men will go on to do wickedly, even in the very place where right conduct is peculiarly incumbent." 14

11. "Jehovah thy hand is lifted up, yet they see not: but they shall see thy zeal for the people, and be put to shame; yea, fire shall devour thine adversaries."

The hand of God has been revealed in the history of the nations, and particularly in Israel, but they have not seen it. "They regard not the work of the Lord nor see the operation of His hands (Is. 5:12).

"But they have no eye to see this hand: they will be obliged to see, though they do not like to do so, - they will come to feel the hand of Jehovah in itself, especially as the Avenger of His people." 15 Is. 66:15, 24.

12. "Jehovah, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou hast also wrought all our works for us."

Here is expressed confidence and hope that Jehovah will establish peace for his people in the future (Is. 26:3; 57:19; Ps. 29:11; John 14:27) and the reason for this confidence is that He has wrought all our works for us in the past. Ps. 57:2; Is. 60:21; 64:8; Ps. 90: 16-17.

13. "O Jehovah our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name."

The common explanation of "lords" is that the Babylonian oppressors of Israel are meant, but the prophet may have had in mind particularly the deities in whose name these heathen oppressors claimed to govern, the strange gods of the nations. Jos. 23:7. The last part of the verse expresses the purpose to worship only Jehovah, acknowledging Him only as Lord and celebrating only His name. Is. 63:7.

14. "They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all remembrance of them to perish."

"It seems best to refer this verse to the strange lords of the foregoing verse, that is, the idols themselves, but with some allusion, as in that case, to the idolatrous oppressors of the Jews. -- The meaning of the verse, as connected with the one before it, is that the strange lords who had ruled them should not only cease to do so, but, so far as they were concerned, should cease to exist or be remembered." 16 Ps. 135:17.

15. "Thou hast increased the nation, O Jehovah, thou hast increased the nation; thou are glorified; thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land."

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- 14. Alexander on Isaiah.
 - 15. Delitzsch on Isaiah.
 - 16. A lexander on Isaiah.

The increase of the nation, the enlargement of the land is one of the works Jehovah has wrought for his people, by which Jehovah is glorified, and for which grateful acknowledgement must be given. Gen. 12:2; Deut. 10:22; Is. 54:2-3; Ps. 86:9-10. "And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved." (Acts 2:47).

16. "Jehovah, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them."

Trouble and chastisement often cause God's people to seek Him earnestly in humble, submissive supplication. Deut. 4:29-30; Ps. 50:15. Note the case of Hannah, I Sam. 1:15; Hezekiah, Is. 37:2-3; Manasseh II Chron. 33:12-13.

17. "Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain and crieth out in her pangs; so we have been before thee, O Jehovah."

"Pregnancy and pangs here symbolize a state of most intense expectancy, the end of which seems to be so much nearer the more the sufferings are intensified." 17

18. "We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen."

The vivid figure of the foregoing verse is here continued and applied. Not only the extreme anguish of the people is set forth, but also their disappointed hope, and the fruitlessness of man's own effort. According to Delitzsch's interpretation, Israel's own doings did not avail to 'make the land salvation', that is, to aid it in reaching full and satisfactory salvation.

"The 'we' is in antithesis to 'thy', 'my' (verse 19), what we vainly attempt, God will accomplish." 18

19. "Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead."

In striking contrast to the disappointed hope and fruitlessness of human effort as set forth in verse 18, there is here the promise of resurrection through the life-giving power of God. Interpreters differ as to the meaning of this resurrection. Some say it refers to a national restoration of the Jews who had been civilly dead while in captivity at Babylon. In other words the prophet "represents the restoration of the exiles and of the theocracy under the figure of a resurrection." Then there was not only a national restoration, but a spiritual resurrection of those who were dead in trespasses and in sin. This also is due to the regenerating power of the Spirit of God. Or it may refer to a literal bodily resurrection of individuals from the dead - a foreshadowing of the Pauline doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The Cambridge Bible says, "There can be no doubt that here a literal resurrection of individuals is foretold," and Dr. Delitzsch says, "The prophet here plainly means to say that those who acknowledge Jehovah will be awakened out of their graves and restored to the church." Compare Is. 25:8; Dan. 12:2; John 5:25, 28, 29; John 11:25, 26; I Cor. 15:20-23.

17. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

18. J. F. and Brown Commentary.

20. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."

This is a call to the people to a waiting in private, patient expectation and hope. Just as Noah entered the ark, and Jehovah shut him in, where he was safe from God's judgment upon a wicked world, (Gen. 7:1, 16) just as the Israelites were safe in their houses from the destroying angel, when the blood was upon their door posts (Ex. 12:22-23), so here God's people are invited to enter their chambers. We have chambers of separation from the world (II Cor. 6:17; Rev. 18:4) of safety (Ps. 32:7; 91:4), and of solitude of prayer (Mt. 6:6). The time of hiding is short, for the storm of indignation will soon be past. Is. 54:7-8; Ps. 30:5; II Cor. 4:17.

21. "For behold, Jehovah cometh forth out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."

A reason for patience and hope is here expressed - Jehovah is coming in judgment. (Jude 14, 15) Delitzsch says that the earth brings forth two witnesses (1) the innocent blood, violently shed, (2) persons themselves who have been innocently murdered, and who slumber within her. "Streams of blood come to light and bare witness; martyrs arise and testify against their murders." Gen. 4:10-11; Rev. 6:9-11.

Chap. 27. (See Introduction to this section).

27:1. "In that day Jehovah with his hard and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the crooked serpent; and he will slay the monster that is in the sea."

Continuing the idea of chap. 26:21, this verse vividly sets forth Jehovah's vengeance upon His enemies.

"The powers hostile to God's people are here symbolically represented as monsters. Leviathan the piercing (R.V. 'swift') serpent perhaps stands for Assyria, watered by the rapid Tigris, and leviathan the crooked serpent for Babylon, whose river was the winding Euphrates. The dragon crocodile, that is, Egypt as in 51:9." 19

2. "In that day: A vineyard of wine, sing ye unto it!"

The fourth echo: the fruitful vineyard under the protection of Jehovah, 27:2-6.

God's people are compared to a vineyard of wine. (Chap. 5:1-7)

An unusual interpretation is here given by Alexander who translates the verse as follows: "In that day, as a vineyard of wine, afflict her." Instead of the verse being an exhortation to the people to sing to the vineyard or the church, this proposed interpretation would make it a challenge to her enemies to do their worst, declaring that God still protects her. (See Alexander on Isaiah, Vol. I, pp. 312-14).

In our interpretation we follow the almost unanimous view which gives the Hebrew word the sense of 'sing', instead of 'afflict', and regards the verses immediately following as a song.

3. "I Jehovah am its keeper; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

As the keeper of a vineyard cultivates and protects it, so does Jehovah care for His people. Compare Ps. 121, where Jehovah is set forth as the keeper of His people, and John 10:28.

4. "Wrath is not in me: would that the briers and thorns were against me in battle! I would march upon them, I would burn them together!"

The probable meaning of this verse is concisely suggested by Alexander in the following words: "I am no longer angry with my people; oh that their enemies (as thorns and briers) would array themselves against me, that I might rush upon them and consume them." Compare II Sam. 23:6; II Pet. 2:9.

5. "Or else let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; yea, let him make peace with me."

Over against the threat of destruction is the offer of salvation. To the sinner who will come to Him for refuge, Jehovah becomes his strength and salvation. Christ crucified is the power of God. Peace was made through the blood of the cross. Is. 26:3-4, 12; 57:19; II Cor. 5:19-21; Eph. 2:16-17; Col. 1:20-21.

6. "In days to come shall Jacob take root; Israel shall blossom and bud; and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit."

The song of the vineyard is supposed to end with verse five while the figure is continued into verse six. The idea of the growth, greatness, and glory of the true religion is here presented. Compare Is. 4:2; 6:13; 35:1-2; 37:31; Rom. 11:12; Rev. 11:15.

7. "Hath he smitten them as he smote those that smote them? or are they slain according to the slaughter of them that were slain by them?"

Verse 7-11 tell further of Jehovah's visitation in mercy and judgment.

The answer to the questions of this verse is in the negative, for Jehovah had not smitten Israel as He had the empire that had attacked Israel, neither had He slain His people as He did their oppressors. Is. 10:20-25; 37:36-38.

8. "In measure, when thou sendest them away, thou dost contend with them; he hath removed them with his rough blast in the day of the east wind."

Continuing the thought of the previous verse the nature of Israel's chastisement is further described: "Israel was punished moderately, and for a time, by being removed out of his place as if by a transient storm

or blast of wind."²⁰ Jer. 30:11; 46:28; I Cor. 10:13; Ps. 76:10.

9. "Therefore by this shall the iniquity of Jacob be forgiven, and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: that he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, so that the Asherim and the sun-images shall rise no more."

Verses 7 and 8 dwell upon the nature of Israel's chastisement, which was moderate and temporary. This verse indicates the design of their affliction; it is a remedial measure, to produce the effect of purging them from their sin, primarily the sin of idolatry. "By Israel's putting away the fundamental cause of all evil, namely, idolatry, the guilt for which it has now to suffer will be covered, that is, will be esteemed by God as no longer existent."²¹ "Chastisements expiate our offences indirectly, but not directly, because they lead us to repentance, which again in turn brings us to obtain the forgiveness of sins."²² Is. 4:4; Ps. 119:67, 71; Hos. 14:8; II Chron. 14:5; 34:4.

10. "For the fortified city is solitary, a habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof."

There are two views as to the meaning of the fortified city. One view is that it refers to the hostile city of the enemies, the capital of the world-empire, the same as in chap. 25:2. The other view is that it refers to Jerusalem, made desolate by the Chaldeans. The figure of the vineyard seems to be continued here. Such passages as Is. 5:6; 6:11-12; and Micah 3:12 seem to favor this view. In either case God's judgment must fall upon the ungodly, whether Gentile or Jew.

11. "When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off, the women shall come, and set them on fire; for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have compassion upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favor."

The description of the desolation and destruction of the fortified city is here continued. Compare Ezek. 15:2-8 and John 15:6.

"No understanding" evidently means no spiritual understanding. Is. 1:3; 5:13; Deut. 32:28-29; Jer. 8:7. The last part of the verse tells of the fearful consequences of lack of spiritual knowledge. Hos. 4:6; Rom. 1:28, 31.

12. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will beat of his fruit from the flood of the River unto the brook of Egypt; and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel."

From the thought of judgment of the foregoing verse, the pendulum now swings to that of the salvation of the remnant of Israel from Assyria to Egypt through their being in-gathered by Jehovah. Is. 11:11-16; 24:13-16a; 56:8. These will be gathered as individuals. Mt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:4; John 10:16.

20. Alexander on Isaiah.

21. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

22. Calvin

13. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and they that were outcasts in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem."

The figure changes from that of gathering fruit to that of the blowing of a trumpet by which the outcasts in Assyria and in Egypt are gathered. Compare Hos. 11:11 and Zech. 10:8-12. Matthew Henry suggests that the proclamation of Cyrus, by which the Jews in captivity were given freedom to return to their land was this great trumpet. It applies also to the gospel call to the unconverted to find salvation in Christ, and to the trump of God calling His people from their graves at the last day. Spiritually restored their highest spiritual exercise is the worship of Jehovah (Is. 2:3; Mal. 1:11; John 4:21-24; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 7:15) realizing the chief end of man, which is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Chapters 28-33. A Series of Woes.

Dr. Delitzsch says of chapters 28-32 that they "are as faithful a reflection of the state of the nation under Hezekiah as chaps 7-12 are of its state under Ahaz. The age of Ahaz is characterized by tame surrender to the Assyrian bondage; that of Hezekiah, by carnal striving after freedom. The nation wished to shake off the Assyrian yoke; but in reliance on the help of Egypt, not on Jehovah. This policy of leaning on Egypt is traced by Isaiah in chaps 28-32 step by step", while in chap 33 the last woe is directed against Assyria. #

Chap. 28. Judgment on Samaria and Jerusalem in the midst of which Mercy is Remembered.

The contents of this chapter may be briefly expressed as follows:
 1. The drunkenness of Ephraim will lead to destruction. (vss 1-4) 2. To the remnant of His people Jehovah himself will be a crown and diadem, giving them wisdom and strength. (vss 5-6) 3. Drunkenness in Judah, especially of priest and prophet, and their despising of instruction of God's prophet, will lead to destruction. (vss 7-13) 4. Dependence upon human diplomacy rather than divine deliverance will lead to destruction. Safety from the overflowing scourge may be secured only through belief in the Stone. (vss 14-22) 5. Divine dealings with men are illustrated by a parable from agriculture. (vss 23-29).

28:1. "Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley of them that are overcome with wine."

By "Ephraim" the prophet has in mind the kingdom of the ten tribes; the drunkards are the sinful population, and "the crown of pride" their capital city of Samaria. Because the city would soon be destroyed it is also called the fading flower. "In a single image of great beauty the prophet describes the picturesque situation of the city, the tone of its society, and its ripeness for judgment." 1 "Samaria lay on a beautiful circular hill, which commanded the country about it in a regal way (Amos 4:1; 6:1), and swelled up from a deep, broad basis of two stadia in diameter, encircled by a garland of still higher mountains (Amos 3:9). The situation was commanding, the hill cultivated up to the top in terraces, the neighborhood splendid and fertile." 2

Pride and intemperance were outstanding sins of Ephraim, and the cause of this first woe of this series of woes. Compare 5:11, 22; Prov. 23:29-30; Amos 6:6; II Kings 18:10-12.

2. "Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one; as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty waters overflowing, will be cast down to the earth with the hand."

Assyria was Jehovah's instrument for the overthrow of Israel, and was probably the mighty and strong one referred to here. Compare 8:7

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1. Cambridge Bible.
 2. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

and 10:5. With violence the pride of Ephraim was to be cast down.
Mt. 7:25-27.

3-4. "The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot, and the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be as the first-ripe fig before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up."

Samaria will be completely destroyed, trodden under foot, swallowed up. The regular season for ripe figs is August. The first-ripe figs were in June - rare and delicious fruit, eagerly devoured.

"This comparison expresses the avidity with which the enemy would seize upon Samaria, and perhaps the completeness of its desolation." 3

5. "In that day will Jehovah of hosts become a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people."

In contrast to the false glory of Ephraim which will fade, Jehovah will be the true glory to the remnant. Compare Is. 4:2-6; 10:20-21; 45:25; 60:1, 19; Rom. 11:5.

6. "And a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate."

Jehovah himself, "the Lord of the seven spirits" (Is. 11:2) will be a spirit of justice to the magistrates, as He was to Joseph (Gen. 41:38-39), to the seventy elders appointed to assist Moses (Num. 11:16-17), to Solomon (I Kings 3:28); and strength to the warriors, as He was to Joshua (Josh. 1:9), and to Hezekiah and his men (II Chron. 32:6-8). Psalm 46:1, 11.

7. "And even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment."

Not only is there drunkenness in Samaria, but also in Jerusalem, as in these verses the Southern Kingdom is in the mind of the prophet. Not only the common people, but especially the leaders fall into disgraceful intemperance, with the result that they err in the exercise of their official functions. Lev. 10:9-10; Prov. 20:1; 31:4-5.

8. "For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean."

This is a vivid picture of the filth and shame of intemperance. Compare Hab. 2:15-16.

9. "Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand this message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast?"

Jehovah had told the Jews the way to true rest and peace - trust and obey, "To do the will of Jesus - this is rest," Jo 30:15; Jer. 6:16; Mt. 11:28-29; but they 158

This and the following verse are commonly interpreted as the language of the drunkards expressing their contempt for the teaching of the prophet as too elementary for them. Added to the sin of drunkenness is that of despising instruction - unteachableness. "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil." (John 3:19)

10. "For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little."

This continues the thought of the foregoing verse. It seems to represent the complaint and mockery of the drunkards at the repeated emphasis upon the first principles of religion. II Chron. 36:15-16.

"It may be observed here that God's method of imparting religious truth has often appeared to a scoffing world to be undignified and foolish. Sinners suppose that He does not sufficiently respect their understanding and pay a tribute to the dignity of their nature." 4

11. "May, but by men of strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people."

This appears to be the response of the prophet to the above complaint foretelling the corresponding judgment.

"Here it means in a foreign or barbarous tongue; and the sense is, that the lessons which God wished to teach would be conveyed to them through the language of foreigners - the Chaldeans. They should be removed to a distant land, and there, in hearing a strange speech, in living long among foreigners, they should learn the lesson which they refused to do when addressed by the prophets in their own land." 5

12. "To whom he said, This is the rest, give ye rest to him that is weary; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear."

13. "Therefore shall the word of Jehovah be unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken."

"Thus the word of Jehovah which they regarded as an endless series of petty rules, becomes to them an endless series of painful sufferings. To such free-thinkers and free-livers it proves a stone on which they are broken to pieces, a net in which they are snared, a trap in which they are caught. (Is. 8:14f)" 6

14. "Wherefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye scoffers, that rule this people that is in Jerusalem."

These self-indulgent, self-confident rulers, who held in contempt

4. Barnes.

5. Ibid.

6. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

the word of God and judgments of God are directly addressed from verse 14. "The 'scoffer' represents the last degree of ungodliness, - open contempt of religion. The phrase here is applied to worldly politicians, who form their plans in defiance of Jehovah's revealed will (f. v. 22; ch. 29:20)."

15. "Because we have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves."

"That the prophet makes them say here is the substance of their thinking and speaking as known to the Heart-searcher." ⁸ They thought they had made themselves secure, "that they had, as it were, bought off death and Hades." ⁹ They depended upon their human diplomacy rather than upon Jehovah. Compare "overflowing scourge" with chap. 8:7-8.

"The falsehood mentioned in the last clause is unfaithfulness to God, that is, wickedness in general, perhaps with an allusion to the falsity or treacherous nature of the hopes built upon it." ¹⁰ Amos 2:4; Is. 59:3-4.

16. "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste."

Contrast^s with foregoing verse are striking: words of scoffers versus words of Jehovah; the false grounds of their confidence, the true ground of confidence; human effort, God's work; Sheol, Zion; scoffers, believers; "because", "therefore".

This verse contains a glorious Messianic promise to the believer. The "I" is emphatic, showing the work of Jehovah in contrast to human diplomacy. Stone is suggestive of security against the over-whelming scourge. This finds its complete fulfilment in Christ as repeatedly interpreted in the New Testament. He was "tried - both by the devil (Lu. 4:1-13) and by men (Lu. 20:1-38), and even by God (Mt. 27:46) a stone of tested solidity to bear the vast superstructure of man's redemption. The tested righteousness of Christ gives its peculiar merit to His vicarious sacrifice." ¹¹ He was precious - the cornerstone. Compare I Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20.

"Whoever believes in the promised One shall not take flight, need not flee. -- It is one of the three Old Testament sayings about faith, each of which is thrice referred to in the New Testament - Gen. 15:6, twice in Paul and once in James, Is. 28:16 twice in Paul and once in Peter, Hab. 2:4 twice in Paul and once in the Epistle to the Hebrews." ¹² See Rom. 9:33; 10:11; I Pet. 2:6-8.

17. "And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place."

Justice and righteousness are eternal principles by which Jehovah

7. Cambridge Bible.

8. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

9. Dummelow Commentary.

10. Alexander on Isaiah.

11. J. F. and Brown Commentary.

12. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

builds His Church and by which He also punishes the wicked. "But Jehovah of hosts is exalted in justice, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness." (Is. 5:16) See also Is. 30:18.

The last of the verse shows the judgment that will come upon those who have made lies their refuge, and have hidden themselves under falsehood. (vs 15) Hail and overflowing waters are frequent figures of judgment. Rev. 11:19; 16:21; Mt. 7:27; II Pet. 3:6-7.

18. "And your covenant with death shall be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it."

The human means of protection will all come to nought and be of no use to defend them against the impending calamity. Compare vs 15, chap. 8:10.

19. "As often as it passeth through, it shall take you; for morning by morning shall it pass through, by day and by night; and it shall be nought but terror to understand the message."

"The meaning may be that the threatened visitation shall come soon and be frequently repeated. There are three interpretations of the last clause, one of which supposes it to mean, that the mere report of the approaching scourge should fill them with distress; another that the effect should be unmingled distress; a third, that nothing but a painful experience would enable them to understand the lesson which the Prophet was commissioned to teach them".¹³ This last interpretation is our preference.

20. "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

This is probably a proverbial expression used here to show the discomfort and insufficiency of their man-made efforts to provide rest and safety for themselves. Is. 59:6; 64:6.

21. "For Jehovah will rise up as in mount Perazim, he will be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon; that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act."

The historical refer^{ences} are probably to David's victories over the Philistines described in II Sam. 5:18-25, and I Chron. 14:9-16.

Jehovah's work is called strange, perhaps because as a result of it His own people would fare in judgment like their enemies, the Philistines had once fared. The Cambridge Bible suggests that the strangeness of Jehovah's work consists in "his fighting with the foreigners against his own people."

22. "Now therefore, be ye not scoffers, lest your bonds be made strong; for a decree of destruction have I heard from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, upon the whole earth."

13. Alexander on Isaiah.

This admonition that they cease mocking suggests the possibility of repentance, and consequent escape from severe judgment. "Let them not make the judgment heavier than it will otherwise be, for its coming is inevitable. It may be mitigated to them, and by thorough repentance they might even escape it; but that it will come and that upon the whole earth, Jehovah of hosts has revealed to the prophet." ¹⁴

23. "Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken and hear my speech."

Special attention to this parable from husbandry is needed. While the parable itself is clear, its purpose and application are more difficult to determine, and have called forth a variety of interpretations.

"Some regard the passage as intended to illustrate, in a general way, the wisdom of the divine dispensations. Others refer it more specifically to the delay of judgment on the sinner, and conceive the doctrine of the passage to be this, that although God is not always punishing, any more than the husbandman is always ploughing or always threshing, he will punish at last. A third interpretation makes the prominent idea to be this, that although God chastises his own people, his ultimate design is not to destroy but to purify and save them." ¹⁵

24. "Doth he that ploweth to sow plow continually? doth he continually open and harrow his ground?"

Emphasis is evidently upon the word "continually" and the implied answer to the question is "No".

25. "When he hath levelled the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and put in the wheat in rows, and the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in the border thereof?"

Care is taken by the husbandman in the sowing and planting of his grain.

26. "For his God doth instruct him aright, and doth teach him."

Skill and knowledge in agriculture and in other forms of work come from God. Compare Ex. 31:2-6; Gen. 6:14-16; Dan. 1:17; Jas. 1:17; Is. 28:29.

27. "For the fitches are not threshed with a sharp threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod."

"The point of the illustration is that the method suitable to one kind of grain would be ruinous to the other." ¹⁶ Discretion is used in successful husbandry.

14. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

15. Alexander on Isaiah.

16. Cambridge Bible.

28. "Bread grain is ground; for he will not be always thrashing it; and though the wheel of his cart and his horses scatter it, he doth not grind it."

Afflictions are God's threshing instruments, designed to loosen us from the world, to separate between us and our chaff, and to prepare us for use. And, as to these, God will make use of them as there is occasion; but he will proportion them to our strength; they shall be no heavier than there is need. " 17 Compare Luke 22:31-32; John 12:24; I Cor. 3:9.

29. "This also cometh forth from Jehovah of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom."

"The skill wherewith a husbandman duly adjusts his modes of threshing is given by God, as well as the skill (vs 26) wherewith he tills and sows (vss 24,25)." 18

Jehovah is wonderful in counsel (Is. 9:6), and excellent in wisdom (Rom. 11:33).

17. Matthew Henry Commentary.

18. J. F. and Brown Commentary.

Chap. 29. Distress and Deliverance, Degeneration and Regeneration.

In verses 1-4 of this chapter the distress of God's people is foretold, in verses 5-8 their deliverance is described, in verses 9-16 their degeneration is rebuked, and in verses 17-24 regeneration is foretold.

"This chapter consists of two parts, parallel to one another, that is, each containing the same series of promises and threatenings, but in different forms. The prophetic substance or material of both is that Zion should be threatened and assailed yet not destroyed, but on the contrary strengthened and enlarged. -- In the first part, the threatening is that Zion shall be assailed by enemies and brought very low, vss 1-4. The promise is that the assailants shall be scattered like dust and chaff, vanish like a dream, and be wholly disappointed in their hostile purpose, vss 5-8. In the second part the Prophet brings distinctly into view, as causes of the threatened judgments, the spiritual intoxication and stupor of the people, their blindness ~~is~~ revealed truth, their hypocritical formality, and their presumptuous contempt of God. vss 9-16. The judgment itself is described as a confounding of their fancied wisdom, vs. 14. The added promise is that of an entire revolution, including the destruction of the wicked, and especially of wicked rulers, the restoration of spiritual sight, joy to the meek and poor in spirit, and the final recovery of Israel from a state of alienation and disgrace to the service of Jehovah and to the saving knowledge of the truth, vss 17-24." ¹

29:1. "Ho Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! add ye year to year; let the feasts come round."

Ariel is a symbolic name for Jerusalem. It means either (1) "the lion of God" (II Sam. 23:20), or (2) "the hearth of God" (Ezek. 43:15-16) (Is. 31:9).

The latter part of the verse may be ironical, "and designed to denote that all their service was an unvarying repetition of heartless forms." ² Is. 1:14.

2. "Then will I distress Ariel, and there shall be mourning and lamentation; and she shall be unto me as Ariel."

Different views of the last clause are as follows: "Either, 'the city shall be as the lion of God, that is, it shall emerge from its dangers unvanquished; or it shall be as the altar of burnt offering', consuming with fire the besiegers (vs 6; ch. 30:30; 31:9; Lev. 102); or best, as the next verse continues the threat, and the promise of deliverance does not come til verse 5, 'it shall be like a hearth of burning', that is, a scene of devastation by fire." ³

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1. Alexander on Isaiah.
 2. Barnes.
 3. J. F. and Brown Commentary.

3. "And I will encamp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with posted troops, and I will raise siege-works against thee."

The siege is represented as the work of God himself. Luke 19:43-44.

4. "And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust; and thy voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust."

Not only distress and siege are foretold, but also humiliation. "Her voice shall come from the earth as that of the spirit charmers or necromancers (ch. 8:19), faint and shrill, as the voice of the dead was supposed to be; ventriloquism was doubtless the trick caused to make the voice appear to come from the earth (ch. 19:3)." ⁴

5. "But the multitude of thy foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones as chaff that passeth away; yea it shall be in an instant suddenly."

Over against the general distress pictured in verses 1-4, we have in verses 5-8 the prophecy of the deliverance of God's people. Verse 5 suggests the completeness and suddenness of the dispersion of the enemy. Compare ch. 17:13-14; 30:13; 37:36.

6. "She shall be visited of Jehovah of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire."

As the foregoing verse suggests the sudden fall of Sennacherib's host, so does this verse suggest phenomena in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus. However, there is much in favor of Alexander's supposition that these verses contain "A strong metaphorical description of the evils which Jerusalem should suffer at the hands of enemies, but without exclusive reference to any one siege, or to sieges in the literal sense at all."

7. "And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her stronghold, and that distress her, shall be as a dream, a vision of the night."

The enemies of Ariel shall disappear and vanish like a dream. Compare Is. 37:36; Rev. 20:9.

8. "And it shall be as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh: but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion."

As the foregoing verse compares the enemy to a dream that will vanish so this verse compares the enemy to a dreamer who is disappointed, when he awakes, because his appetite is not satisfied. "Soul" is here used in the sense of "Appetite". The enemies of Ariel are doomed to disappointment and disappointment.

9. "Tarry ye and wonder: take your pleasure and be blind; they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink."

"Here begins the description of the moral and spiritual evils which were the occasion of the judgments previously threatened. In the first clause, the Prophet describes the condition of the people by exhorting them ironically to continue in it; in the second he seems to turn away from them and address the spectators. -- By spiritual drunkenness we are probably to understand unsteadiness of conduct and a want of spiritual discernment." 5

10. "For Jehovah hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, hath he covered."

As a judgment for their sins they were in a state of spiritual stupidity, Is. 6:9-10, and their religious leaders were spiritually blinded. The apostle Paul applies these words to the Jews of his time, Rom. 8:11.

11. "And all vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed."

This continues the thought that they were judicially blinded. God's revelation was as a sealed book to them. Although one may have outward understanding he may not have inner spiritual discernment and vice versa. Mt. 11:25; 13:11; 16:17; Rev. 5:1-9.

12. "And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned."

"The unlearned succeed no better than the learned, not from want of human learning, as they fancy, but from not having the teaching of God (Is. 54:13; Jer. 31:34; John 6:45; I Cor. 2:7-10; I John 2:20)." 6

13. "And the Lord said, For as much as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them:"

As the above verses emphasize spiritual stupidity, so here the emphasis is upon an outstanding theme of prophecy, namely, the sin of hypocrisy. This theme receives prominence in the first chapter of Isaiah (Is. 1:10-17). Compare Ezek. 33:31-33; Micah 6:6-8.

"In Hezekiah's days (as later in Josiah's, as the Book of Jeremiah shows) the nation was forced to accept the abolition of public idol-worship, but its worship of Jehovah was in part conscious hypocrisy from fear of man and for human praise, in part unconscious, comforting itself with, and glorifying in outward observance of the law in a self-righteous spirit without inward conversion."

Jesus most severely rebuked the Jews of His day for hypocrisy, applying these very words of Isaiah to them. Mt. 15:2-6; Mark 7:2-13.

5. Alexander on Isaiah.

6. J. F. and Brown Commentary.

7. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

14. "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

Here is the conclusion to the foregoing verse, a prophecy of judgment upon such sinners. Compare "marvellous work" with "strange work" of Is. 28:21, and the unbelievable work of Hab. 1:5.

The last of this verse, stating that God will frustrate and bring to nought human wisdom, is used by the apostle Paul in I Cor. 1:19 as he proclaims the word of the cross as over against the wisdom of the world. Compare Is. 5:21.

15. "Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah, and whose works are in the dark, and that say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?"

Judgment is pronounced on anyone so foolish and hypocritical as to seek to hide anything from Jehovah. Jer. 23:24. Such a one is so stupid as to think he can hide not only from man, but even from God.

"As Ahaz carefully kept his appeal for Assyria's help from the prophet's knowledge, so now they try to hide the project of an alliance with Egypt as far as possible from the prophet." 8

16. "Ye turn things upside down! Shall the potter be esteemed as clay; that the thing made should say of him that made it, He made me not, or the thing formed say of him that formed it, He hath no understanding?"

Their perverting the order of things is as absurd as if the thing made would deny the maker's work or his maker's understanding. For the figure of the potter and clay compare Is. 45:9-10; 64:8; Jer. 18:1-6; Rom. 9:19-21.

17. "Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?"

Whereas in verse 9-16 their degeneration is rebuked, in verses 17-24 regeneration is foretold. In verse 17, under a figure taken from the physical world and in the form of a question, is given the promise of a general change - a revolution, which is described more in detail in the verses which follow.

18. "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness."

What a change from verses 10-12! Spiritual hearing and vision are promised. See Is. 42:16-18. "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, Jehovah hath made even both of them" (Prov. 20:12) Spiritual insight comes only from above, Mt. 13:17; 11:5.

19. "The meek also shall increase their joy in Jehovah, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

Not only spiritual insight but also spiritual joy is promised - joy in Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel - to those who put their trust in Him, the meek, the poor among men. Such are the particular objects of His grace and recipients of true joy. See. Is. 61:1; Ps. 25:9; 37:11; Mt. 5:5; 11:29; James 1:21; 2:5; Is. 57:15; Mt. 5:3; Hab. 3:18; Phil. 4:4.

20. "For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scoffer ceaseth, and all they that watch for iniquity are cut off."

Another blessing promised is the overthrow of the wicked. "Terrible ones" may refer to the outward enemy. Compare Is. 25:4-5. The scoffer despises religion. Compare Is. 28:14-22. To this class belonged "the Pharisees, who were lovers of money" (Luke 16:14), King Herod (Luke 23:11), and the rulers who scoffed at the crucifixion (Luke 23:35). Not only the terrible ones and the scoffers, but also all "they that watch for iniquity are cut off." (Luke 20:20-23)

21. "That make a man an offender in his cause, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just with a thing of nought."

Here is a further description of the wicked who will be overthrown. "Some understand the first clause to mean, seducing people into sin by their words. It is much more common to explain the whole phrase to mean unjustly condemning a man in his cause, which agrees well with the obvious allusion to forensic process in the remainder of the verse." 9

Many of the Jews of the New Testament times well illustrate the kind of sinners here described. Mt. 22:15; Luke 11:53-54; Mt. 26:15; Acts 3:14.

22. "Therefore thus saith Jehovah, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob; Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale."

Not only are promised spiritual insight, spiritual joy, and the overthrow of the wicked. In Israel's approaching regeneration Jacob shall be free from shame, and fear or disappointment.

The God who promises this is the God "who redeemed Abraham" from idols (Gen. 11:31; 12:1; Josh. 24:2), from dangers (Gen. 12:17; 14:16; 20:14), blessing him and making his name great. He chose him, found his heart faithful, and made a covenant with him. (Neh. 9:7, 8)

"Some understand by Jacob here the patriarch himself, poetically represented as beholding and sympathizing with the fortunes of his own descendants. Most interpreters suppose the name to be employed like Israel in direct application to the race itself." 10 Is. 45:17, 25; 60:1-9; Jer. 30:10.

23. "But when he seeth his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name; yea, they shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall stand in awe of the God of Israel."

9. Alexander on Isaiah.

10. Ibid.

The true meaning of this verse may be brought out in the paraphrase suggested by Alexander as follows: "When he (the patriarch, supposed to be again alive and gazing at his offspring) shall behold his children (not by nature but) created such by me in the midst of him (that is in the midst or in the place of his natural descendants) they (that is he and his descendants jointly) shall unite in glorifying God as the author of this great revolution." Compare Hos. 3:5.

For Jacob's children as "the work of Jehovah's hands" see Is. 19:25; 43:21; 45:11; 60:21; Eph. 2:10.

For "Holy One of Jacob" or "Holy One of Israel" compare note on chap. 1:4.

24. "They also that err in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmur shall receive instruction."

"The new community will not indeed be sinless and absolutely perfect, but, according to verse 24, the previous hardening of themselves in error gives way to willing, living acceptance of right knowledge and the previous murmuring and resistance to Jehovah's admonitions to an open joyous desire to learn." 11

"When this would occur the prophet does not state. It may be intended to denote the times of Hezekiah; or the times subsequent to the captivity; or possibly it may refer to the times under the Messiah. All that the prophet teaches is, that at some future period in the history of the Jews, there would be such a reform that ^{they} should be regarded as the worthy descendants of the pious patriarch, Jacob." 12

11. Delitzsch on Isaiah.

12. Barnes.

Chap. 30. Sin, Grace, Justice.

Some of the foremost themes of the Bible, as they are related to the Holy One of Israel are found in this chapter. First, we are told that the Spirit of Jehovah is disregarded. (vss. 1-7) This is evidenced by the fact that God's rebellious children put their reliance upon Egypt instead of following the counsel of Jehovah. Their negotiations with Egypt "are bad politics and bad religion; but the bad religion is the root and source of the other."¹ Second, the Law of Jehovah is disobeyed, and the consequences disastrous. (vss. 8-17) Third, the Mercy of Jehovah is promised to them that wait upon Him. (vss. 18-26) Finally, the wrath of Jehovah will be revealed in his victory over Assyria and the destruction of this enemy of God and of God's people. (vss. 27-33)

1. "Woe to the rebellious children, saith Jehovah, that take counsel, but not of me; and that make a league, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin;"

Historically the children of Israel were rebellious. Is. 1:2 emphasizes this. Is. 63:10 says "But they rebelled, and grieved his Holy Spirit." In Deut. 9:24 Moses said, "Ye have been rebellious against Jehovah from the day that I knew you." In Ezekiel Israel is repeatedly called "a rebellious house." In Stephen's address in Acts 7:51, 52 The Jews are referred to as being stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Spirit. Such rebellion is illustrated in their attempt to hid their counsel from Jehovah (Is. 29:15; 8:19) as did King Saul (1 Chron. 10:13, 14) to his own undoing, and in their making a league with a heathen country like Egypt. The A.R.V. margin has the reading "pour out a drink offering;" the Hebrew "pour out libations" which may refer to homage to Egyptian deities in connection with the making of the covenant. Hence sin is added to sin. Rebellion against God naturally leads to forsaking Him for other gods, and all involves a grieving and resisting the Holy Spirit.

2. "That set out to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt."

From the time of the Exodus a return to Egypt was condemned by Jehovah. (Ex. 13:17) For the folly of return to Egypt see further: Is. 20:5-6; 31:1-3; 36:6. Joshua 9:14 tells of another occasion when the Children of Israel asked not at the mouth of Jehovah.

3. "Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the refuge in the shadow of Egypt your confusion."

The result of seeing an unholy alliance is only shame and confusion. On the other hand the scripture saith, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame." (Rom. 10:11)

4. "For their princes are at Zoan, and their ambassadors are come to Hanes."

The princes and ambassadors were the Jews of high rank who were sent to negotiate with the Egyptians. For Zoan see notes on Is. 19:11. The Chaldee renders "Hanes by the word "Tahpanhes". See Jer. 43:7. This place of royal residence, like Zoan, may have been located in Lower Egypt in the delta of the Nile.

5. "They shall all be ashamed because of a people that cannot profit them, that are not a help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach."

The result of their gadding about to secure help from Egypt would not only be useless, to no profit, but on the contrary, a shame and reproach; "Bad politics and bad religion." Compare chap. 20:5-6; 31:1-3; Jer. 2:36.

6. "The burden of the beasts of the South. Through the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the lioness and the lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses and their treasures upon the humps of camels, to a people that shall not profit them."

"South, Negeb, that is, the desert tract South of Judah on the way to Egypt. The verse pictures the journey of the Judean ambassadors through a district infested with dangerous beasts, their camels and asses laden, with presents, where with them hope to purchase Egypt's aid."² Deut. 8:15; Jer. 2:36.

7. "For Egypt helpeth in vain, and to no purpose: Therefore have I called her Rahab that sitteth still."

"Rahab", meaning "pride", was a symbolic name for Egypt. "I call her the blusterer that sitteth still; that is, 'they are courageous in talking; cowards in acting.'"³

8. "Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever."

"After having convicted the Jews of manifest unbelief, he means that it should be attested and sealed by permanent records, that posterity may know how obstinate and rebellious that nation was, and how justly the Lord punished them."⁴

9. "For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah;"

Characteristics of the chosen people were their rebellion against God (vs. 1; chap. 1:2), lying (Is. 28:15; 59:3,4), and refusal to hear the word of Jehovah (Is. 5:24; 24:5).

2. Dummelow.

3. ~~Galvin~~. Barnes

4. ~~Galvin~~

10. "That say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."

Their despising of the Word of Jehovah is here illustrated, and their desire to evade the truth. Compare Acts 4:17; 5:28; John 7:7; 8:45; Gal. 4:16.

11. "Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us."

The fruit of the rebellious heart is not only disregard of the words of the true prophet, but also a desire that the Holy One of Israel himself be removed from their sight "Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God." (Rom. 8:7a) "Being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart." (Eph. 4:18)

12. "Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and rely thereon."

Here is a summary statement of Israel's sin, namely, rejection of the word of God (Is. 5:24) and reliance upon and trust in oppression and perverseness. (Ps. 62:10).

"Perverseness, bent aside, crooked, means a policy which moves in artful byways, as well as oppression, the extortion of the sums of money necessary for the war of liberation and the winning of Egypt's help. (Compare II Kings 15:20)"⁵.

13. "Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly in an instant."

"The slight beginnings of transgression, its inevitable tendency to gravitate more and more from the moral perpendicular, till a critical point is reached, then the suddenness of the final catastrophe, - are vividly expressed by this magnificent simile. (Compare Ps. 62:3)"⁶

14. "And he shall break it as a potter's vessel is broken, breaking it in pieces without sparing; so that there shall not be found among the pieces there of a sherd where with to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern."

The foregoing verse described the catastrophe as gradual and yet sudden. This verse by another striking figure describes the completeness of the catastrophe. The subject of the first verb of the verse is evidently Jehovah. - Compare Ps. 2:9.

5.4. Delitzsch.

6.5. Cambridge Bible.

15. "For thus said the Lord Jehovah the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. And ye would not."

The conditions of salvation and strength are here given and the reason for destruction. "The conditions on which their safety depended, and accepting which they would obtain safety, are returning, turning round (halting) in their self-chosen way, and rest, rest from self confident effort; their strength would be shown in quietness, giving up their engrossing anxiety, bustling activity, and in confidence, confidence, which cleaves to Jehovah, and renouncing self-help, leaves everything to Him. So under Ahaz (7:4) ran the fundamental principle of the prophet's policy. But from the first they would not accept it, nor yet now when the alliance with Egypt has become an inevitable fact." ⁶⁷ Compare Is. 26:3-4; Mt. 23:37; John 5:40.

16. "But ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift."

The law, the prophets and the Psalms write in condemning reliance upon material aid. Compare Deut. 17:16. "Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to the end that he may multiply horses" etc.; Psalm 33:17 "A horse is a vain thing for safety; neither doth he deliver any by his great power." See also Is 31:1,3.

17. "One thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill."

The description of the punishment for their sin begun in the foregoing verse is here continued. In a word the enemy shall easily put them to flight. Compare Deut. 32:30. The remnant to be left shall be as a beacon and an ensign - a solitary warning. Compare Zeph. 3:12; Zech. 13:8-9.

18. "And therefore will Jehovah wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for Jehovah is a God of justice; blessed are all they that wait for him."

Over against sin and its consequences as described in verses 8-17, we have in verses 18-26 the mercy of Jehovah promised to them that wait for him. "Where sin abounded grace did abound more exceedingly." Compare Hos. 2:14 for a similar turn in prophecy. Jehovah's waiting has a gracious purpose, giving opportunity for repentance. Compare Jer. 31:18-20; Hos. 5:15; Hos. 11: 8-9; Johah 3:4-10; Mt. 15:22-28; Lu. 15:20; 2 Pet. 3:9, 15. His exaltation also has a gracious purpose. Compare Acts 2:33-39; 5:31.

"For Jehovah is a God of justice." "To make the former statement more plain, we must lay down the principle, that God exercises moderation in inflicting punishment, because he is inclined to mercy."⁷⁸ Compare Jer. 10:24-25; Jer. 30:11; Micah 7:18-20. In the midst of wrath Jehovah remembers mercy. (Hab. 3:2). Compare the last clause of the verse with Is. 40:31; Ps. 2:12; Ps. 40:1-3; Rom. 8:25-28; James 5:11.

19. "For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more; he will surely be gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear, he will answer thee."

Verses 19-26 enlarge upon the last statement of verse 18, describing some of the blessings of those who wait for Jehovah. Verse 19 mentions three in particular: (1) Dwelling in Zion (Is. 12:6; Zeph 3:14-20); (2) Cessation of sorrow (Is. 12:36; 35:10; Rev. 7:17); (3) Answer to prayer (Is. 58:9; 65:24; Ps. 50:15; Jer. 29:11-13; Jer. 33:3; Mt. 7:7-11; Mark 11:24).

20. "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be hidden any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers;"

"God would afflict them outwardly, but would not deprive them of their spiritual privileges; or, there should be a famine of bread, but not of the word of the Lord (Amos 8:11). The word teachers is probably a designation or description of the prophets, with particular reference, as some suppose, to their reappearance after a period of severe persecution or oppression. (See Ezek. 33:22)"⁸⁹

21. "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

Other blessings promised are the hearing ear and the guiding word. This word is (1) invisible. "Thine eyes see thy teachers; but this is a teacher out of sight, it is thine own conscience, which shall now by the grace of God be awakened to do its office."⁸⁸ (2) This word is definite, pointing out the right way. Is. 35:8-9; 42:16; Ps 25:8-9; 143:8-10; Prov. 3:5-6; I John 2:20,27. (3) This word is timely - "When ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Compare Ps. 32:8; Prov 4:27; Is. 29:24.

22. "And ye shall defile the overlaying of thy graven images of silver, and the plating of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as an unclean thing; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence."

Fruits of grace will be seen in the desecration of the idols, the casting of them away, the renouncing of idolatry - the enemy of grace. Compare Is. 31:7; 2 Kings 23:4-20; 2 Chron. 34:3-7; Deut. 7:25; Rev. 19:20; Ex. 32:2-4,20; Hos. 14:8; Mt. 4:10.

⁷⁸ John Calvin
⁸⁹ Alexanier
⁹⁰ Matthew Henry

23. "And he will give the rain for thy seed, wherewith thou shalt sow the ground; and bread of the increase of the ground, and it shall be fat and plenteous."

Prosperity promised to God's people is here described. Jesus said "But seek ye first his Kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Mt. 6:33). Compare similar figures for spiritual prosperity. Is. 44:3; 55:10-11; 58:11. Note God's care for the beasts. Compare Jonah 4:11.

24. "The oxen likewise and the young asses that till the ground shall eat savory provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fork."

The thought of God's care for the beasts is continued here. Compare the promise of Deut. 28:11 and the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 9:9.

25. "And there shall be upon every lofty mountain, and upon every high hill, brooks and streams of waters, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall."

Alexander says of this passage: "There are no sufficient data in the text itself for any specific and exclusive application. All that can certainly be gathered from the words is, that a period of war and carnage should be followed by one of abundance and prosperity." Compare Ezek. 34:26; John 7:38; Rev. 22:1. For a spiritual use of the figure of the last clause see 2 Cor. 10:4.

26. "Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that Jehovah bindeth up the hurt of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

As the previous verse points forward to the destruction of the enemies of God's people this verse foretells blessings that would come to believers in the true religion. "The beginning of the creation is light, and its end is light. The darkness has only come in between to be overcome. At last comes a morning, after which it is no more said, 'There was evening and there was morning.'" ¹⁰ See Is. 60:19-20; Zech. 14:7; Rev. 21:23; 22:5. Compare the figure in the last part of the verse with Is. 1:6 and 61:1.

27. "Behold, the name of Jehovah cometh from far, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is as a devouring fire."

While verses 18-26 emphasize the grace of God, verses 27-33 emphasize His justice. "The name of Jehovah is Himself as made known in revelation."¹² He appears in wrath for judgment upon Assyria, the enemy of Israel. Compare Daniel 7:9; Nahum 1:6; 2 Thess. 2:8; Heb. 12:29.

28. "And his breath is as an overflowing stream, that reacheth even unto the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction: and a bridle that causeth to err shall be in the jaws of the peoples."

¹⁰. Delitzsch.

¹². Ibid.

Three figures of speech are here used to describe the execution of Jehovah's wrath - stream, sieve, and bridle. "The Assyrian army had been to Judah as an overflowing stream, reaching even to the neck, (ch. 8:7-8) and now the breath of God's wrath will be so to it. Here is a sieve of vanity, with which God would sift these nations of which the Assyrian army was composed - - - Here is a bridle, which God has in their jaws, to curb and restrain them from doing the mischief they would do, and to force and constrain them to serve his purposes against their own will, chap. 10:7."¹³

29. "Ye shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come unto the mountain of Jehovah, to the Rock of Israel."

"The prophet borrows his figure from the first Passover-night in Egypt, when Israel was rejoicing in its deliverance in full course of accomplishment, whilst the destroyer raged without. Just as then will be the song which they will be able to sing when Jehovah holds judgment on His foes without. The Church is then hidden in its chamber (26:20) and its joy is like the heart-felt joy of those who journey on one of the great feasts, or in the procession bringing the first-fruits to Jerusalem with flute-strains to the mountain of Jehovah to appear before Him, the Rock of Israel."¹⁴ See Ex. 12:42; Mt. 26:30; 2 Sam. 23:3.

30. "And Jehovah will cause his glorious voice to be heard, and will show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and the flame of a devouring fire, with a blast, and tempest, and hailstones."

The wrath of Jehovah is presented under the figure of a storm. Compare Ps. 29:3-9; Nahum 1:2-6. Note in this paragraph mention is made of Jehovah's lips, tongue, breath, voice, a vivid description of the Theophany.

31. "For through the voice of Jehovah shall the Assyrian be dismayed; with his rod will he smite him."

In verse 28 the execution of Jehovah's wrath is described under the figures of an overflowing stream, a sieve, and a bridle. In verses 31-33 it is further described under the figures of a rod and staff and Topheth. God's judgment to fall on Assyria is definitely foretold. Compare Is. 10:26; 11:4; Micah 5:5-6; Is. 37:32-38.

32. "And every stroke of the appointed staff, which Jehovah shall lay upon him, shall be with the sound of tabrets and harps; and in battles with the brandishing of his arm will he fight with them."

Jehovah's victory over the Assyrians will be hailed with great joy and exultation by those who had suffered from the hands of the Assyrian power.

"The Assyrian had been himself a rod, in God's hand, for the chastening of his people, and had smitten them - (Ch. 10:5). That was a transient rod; but against the Assyrian shall go forth a grounded staff,

13. M. Henry.

14. Delitzsch.

that shall give a steady blow, shall stick close to him, and strike home, so as to leave an impression upon him; it is a staff with a foundation, founded upon the enemies' deserts, and God's determinate counsel; it is a consumation determined. (Ch. 10:23)"¹⁴

33. "For a Topheth is prepared of old; yea, for the king it is made ready; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

Topheth was in the valley of the Son of Hinnom, south-east of Jerusalem, where the children of Israel sacrificed their children to the idol, Moloch - hence it was a place of abomination unto the Lord, Topheth, and the more general name Hinnom being applied by the later Jews to the place of future eternal punishment. "And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded not, neither came it into my mind. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that it shall no more be called Topheth, nor 'The valley of the son of Hinnom', but the valley of Slaughter: for they shall bury in Topheth, till there be no place to bury." (Jer. 7:31-32).

In Josiah's religious reformation he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or daughter pass through the fire to Molech. (2 Kings 23:10).

"Our Saviour calls the future misery of the damned Gehenna, in allusion to the valley of Hinnom, which gives some countenance to the applying of this to that misery, as also that in the Apocalypse, that is so often called the lake that burns with fire and brimstone . . . God's wrath is the fire, and sinners make themselves fuel to it; and the breath of the Lord (the power of his anger) kindles it, and will keep it ever burning. See chap. 66:24."¹⁵ Compare also Rev. 14:10-11.

Grace Greater than all our Sin. 30:18-22.

Verses 1-17 tell us much of sin and its consequences. Verses 18-22 tell us much of Grace greater than all our Sin. They tell us of

1. The God of All Grace.
2. Some Blessings of Grace.
 - (a) Dwelling in Zion.
 - (b) Weeping no more.
3. Prayer, as a means of Grace.
4. The Word, as a means of Grace.
5. Faith - a gift of Grace.
 - (a) Waiting.
 - (b) Crying.
 - (c) Seeing.
 - (d) Hearing.
6. The Way of Grace.
7. Victory through Grace.

¹⁴. Matthew Henry.

¹⁵. Ibid.