

Not Egypt, but Jehovah.Chap. 31.

Continuing largely the thought found in the previous chapter, a woe is here pronounced upon those who, in disobedience of the command of Deut. 17:16, trust in horses and chariots of Egypt, rather than in Jehovah for help. In contrast ~~to~~ Egyptian help, Jehovah has infinite wisdom, verses 1-3. He also has persistent power, like a lion growling over his prey, verse 4, and tender love, like the bird hovering over her young, verse 5. Having presented these three thoughts of Jehovah, the prophet issues a call to repentance, verse 6, followed by the promise that idolatry will be renounced (30:22), and that the Assyrian power will be broken (30:31-33). A good theme text for the chapter is Psalm 20:7 - "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will make mention of the name of Jehovah our God."

31:1. "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Jehovah!"

Horses from Egypt were highly prized for military purposes. King Solomon secured his great stable of horses from Egypt. The prophets continually condemned Israel for putting their trust in aid from a foreign heathen power, Is. 36:6; Ezek. 17:15; ^{Gen. 17:5} instead of look^{ing} for help to the Holy One of Israel. Is. 9:13; Dan. 9:13.

2. "Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity."

Jehovah has infinite, transcendent wisdom. He is the only wise God (Rom. 16:27), and will carry out what he designs. Is. 30:13-14; Mt. 24:35; Psalm 68:1-2. "The house of evil-doers" probably has reference to Judah (1:4), and "them that work iniquity to Egypt."

3. "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh and not spirit: and when Jehovah shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is helped shall fall, and they all shall be consumed together."

The contrast between human and divine help is continued, and the threat is made that both Egypt and Judah will be destroyed together. Compare Ps. 9:20; Acts 12:22-23. "Jehovah, who is God and Spirit, needs only to stretch out His hand, and helpers and helped, and so the power helping and the object helped, collapse."1

4. "For thus saith Jehovah unto me, As the lion and the young lion growling over his prey, if a multitude of shepherds be called forth against him, will not be dismayed at their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so will Jehovah of hosts come down to fight upon mount Zion, and upon the hill thereof."

"The point of this comparison is, that as the lion that was intent on his purpose could not be frightened from it by numbers, so it would

be with Jehovah, who was equally intent on his purpose - the defence of the city of Jerusalem. The figure is one that denotes the highest vigilance, firmness, steadiness, and a determination on the part of Jehovah that Jerusalem should not fall into the hands of the Assyrian."² Is. 37:35-36; Zech. 2:5. While this is perhaps the most common interpretation, there is another view of the verse as follows, "That Jehovah (through the Assyrians, as in 29:3-4) will hold Jerusalem helpless in His power as the lion holds his prey: though the noisy crowd of shepherds (the Egyptians, the 'helpers' of verse 3) try to scare Him away."³

5. "As birds hovering, so will Jehovah of hosts protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it, he will pass over and preserve it."

Not only has Jehovah persistent power in relation to Jerusalem, but also tender love and compassion, protecting, defending and delivering Jerusalem as the mother bird does her young. Compare the figures in Deut. 32:11 (God's care and training of His children, as he stirs up, soothes, shelters, succors, and supports them); Ps. 91:4; and the words of Jesus Mt. 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

The word "pass over" is the same used in Ex. 12:13, 23, 27 with reference to the passing over by the death angel of the homes where the blood of the lamb was seen.

6. "Turn ye unto him from whom ye have deeply revolted, O children of Israel."

The God of wisdom, power, grace calls His rebellious children to repentance. Compare Is. 55:7; Jer. 31:18-20; Ezek. 18:31-32; Acts 3:19; 26:20; and Manasseh's sin and repentance, 2 Chron. 33:9-16.

7. "For in that day they shall cast away every man his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin."

As pointed out by Delitzsch, the call to repentance of verse 6 is strengthened by two powerful motives drawn from the future, the first one in verse seven "is that one day the abominableness of idolatry will be seen and shunned." "Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols." (Hosea 14:8a) The sin of idolatry is repeatedly emphasized in scripture. Compare I Kings 12:28-30; I John 5:21.

"Trust in idols and reliance upon human helpers are here, as often elsewhere, put together, as identical in principle, and closely connected in the experience of ancient Israel."⁴

2. Barnes.

3. Cambridge Bible.

4. Calvin. Alexander.

8. "And the Assyrian shall fall by the sword, not of man; and the sword, not of men, shall devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall become subject to taskwork."

In this and the following verse is found the second motive to repentance, which is, "Israel will not be saved by men, but by Jehovah alone, so that He, from whom they have now so deeply fallen, shows Himself to be the only true ground of confidence." Compare Is. 10:12; 14:25; 30:31-33; 37:36-38.

9. "And ^{his} the rock shall pass away by reason of terror, and his princes shall be dismayed at the ensign, saith Jehovah, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem."

The discomfiture of the Assyrian power is here pictured, his strength to pass away, and his princes to be dismayed.

"The true explanation of the last clause seems to be that which supposes an allusion both to the sacred fire on the altar and the consuming fire of God's presence, whose altar flames in Zion and whose wrath shall thence flame to destroy his enemies."⁵ See Lev. 6:13; Zech 2:5; Mal. 4:1.

5. Alexander.

Transformation, Desolation, Restoration. Chap. 32.

This chapter may refer to the reign of King Hezekiah as a foreshadowing of the Kingdom of the Messiah. It tells of the reign of the righteous King. It threatens the ruin in Judah in a warning addressed to the women in Jerusalem and promises the restoration to follow. Under the reign of the Righteous King will come such blessings as a righteous government, verses 1-2; spiritual understanding, 3-4; and moral distinctions will not be confused, 5-8.

The second part of the chapter is addressed to the women of Jerusalem who are at ease and careless. They are warned of the desolation and ruin to come as a judgment for sin, verses 9-14. Finally, following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will come restoration to prosperity, peace, justice, righteousness, rest, verses 15-20. Verse 19 harks back to the idea of judgment.

1. "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in justice."

The prophet here may have reference to King Hezekiah (See II Kings 18:3-6) as a type of the Messiah. He had already prophesied concerning the Messianic King in such passages as 9:6-7, and 11:4-5. Compare Ps. 72:1-4; Jer. 23:5-6.

"In a word, he presents to us in this passage a lively picture of the prosperous condition of the Church; and as this cannot be attained without Christ, this description undoubtedly refers to Christ, of whom Hezekiah was a type, and whose Kingdom he foreshadowed."¹

2. "And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a great rock in a weary land."

"All this, and much more, the man Christ Jesus is to all the willing, faithful subjects of his Kingdom. When the greatest evils befall us, not only the wind, but the tempest, when storms of guilt and wrath beset us, and beat upon us, they drive us to Christ, and in him we are not only safe, but satisfied that we are so; in him we find rivers of water for them that hunger and thirst, after righteousness, all the refreshment and comfort that a needy soul can desire, and the shadow, not of a tree, which sun or rain can break through, but of a rock, of a great rock, which reaches a great way for the shelter of the traveller."²

3. "And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hear."

In addition to the blessing of good government (verses 1-2) will be that of spiritual vision and hearing. "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, Jehovah hath made even both of them." (Prov. 20:12).

-
1. Calvin.
 2. Matthew Henry.

4. "And the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly."

"Verse 3 says, the present doom of hardness will be abolished; the spiritual defects, from which many now suffer who are not among the worst, will be healed, says verse 4."³

Compare the first part of this verse with Neh. 8:8-12; Mt. 11:25; Mt. 16:17; and Gal. 1:23; and the second part with Ex. 4:11; Lu. 21:14-15; Acts 2:4-12, and Acts 4:13.

5. "The fool shall be no more called noble, nor the churl said to be bountiful."

Another blessing of the reign of the righteous King will be that moral distinctions will not be confused. See Is. 5:20, and Mal. 3:18. See I Sam. 25:3-8 for typical illustration of a churl.

6. "For the fool will speak folly, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise profaneness, and to utter error against Jehovah, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail."

'Fool' as in the foregoing verse, is used in the sense of wicked. He "is one who thinks foolishly and acts vilely, the common man in opposition to the noble."⁴ Six characteristics of the fool are here given, in which are found sin against God and sin against man, the breaking of both tables of the law; sins of heart, speech and behavior. See Is. 59:13; Mt. 15:19; Acts 5:3-4; 8:21-22.

7. "And the instruments of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the meek with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right."

The instruments, devices and words of the churl, or avaricious or fraudulent man, are evil. Such a man was Judas Iscariot, betraying his Master for thirty pieces of silver (Mt. 26:14-16). Compare also the base persons who witnessed against Naboth, (I Kings 21:10-14), and the men who witnessed against Stephen (Acts 6:11-13).

They seek to destroy the meek, and disregard the pleading of a just cause by the needy.

8. "But the noble deviseth noble things; and in noble things shall he continue."

In contrast to the churl of the foregoing verse, the noble person purposes and persists or perseveres in noble or liberal things. Dorcas had nobility of disposition (Acts 9:39), also the Macedonian Christians were noble-minded (2 Cor. 8:2).

3. Delitzsch.

4. Ibid.

He who is noble in disposition shall stand, "not upon conventional titles or rank, or the respect of insincere hearts, but upon actual deeds of generosity and sacrifice."⁵

9. "Rise up, ye women that are at ease, and hear my voice; ye careless daughters, give ear unto my speech."

In chap. 3:16-26 the prophet had already denounced the wanton women of Jerusalem. Here he addresses them in their ease and carelessness.

10. "For days beyond a year shall ye be troubled, ye careless women; for the vintage shall fail, the ingathering shall not come."

Desolation in the form of the failure of the vintage and fruit harvest is here predicted.

The expression "For days beyond a year" is translated in R. V. Margin, "After a year and days," Hebrew, "Days above a year." The meaning may be that "in a little more than a year" their ease would be followed by anxiety, or the expression may describe the duration of the desolation.

11. "Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones; strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins."

They are commanded to tremble and be troubled and to put on the garments of mourning, the idea may be to suggest repentance and humiliation as a means of averting the threatened judgments.

12. "They shall smite upon the breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine."

They shall give expression to their grief because of the desolation in the land, in contrast to its former fruitfulness.

13. "Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city."

'Thorns and briers' is an expression frequently used by Isaiah to describe the results of judgment upon the land. See 5:6; 7:23-25. Not only the land, but also the houses of joy will not escape the punishment.

14. "For the palace shall be forsaken; the populous city shall be deserted; the hill and the watch-tower shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;"

The threatened judgment will mean the desolation of the city of Jerusalem.- the palace, the hill (the original word being applied to the southern end of Mt. Moriah), and the watch-tower. Compare this with the prophecy of the fall of Babylon in 13:19-22.

15. "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest."

The pendulum here swings from judgment to restoration. This verse tells of the end of the desolation, which is caused by the effusion of the Spirit of God from on high, and the effect, which is a total transformation.

The Spirit poured out from on high changes the character and condition of people, their hearts and their homes. Compare Joel 2:28-29; Luke 24:49; John 7:39; Acts 2:33; Titus 3:5-6. The power of the Holy Spirit from on high is what is needed primarily today in individual Christians and in the church. Pentecostal blessings may be received by us, such as were received in the days of old. Are we willing to pay the price in penitence (Acts 2:38, prayer (Luke 11:13) and obedience to God's commandments (Acts 5:32)?

16. "Then justice shall dwell in the wilderness; and righteousness shall abide in the fruitful field."

"The whold land, the untilled pastures as well as the cultivated corn and fruit land, will then be a dwelling-place of justice and righteousness. Justice and righteousness in Isaiah are the sign of the period of perfection."⁶

"The law of Christ introduces a judgment or rule by which we must be governed, and the gospel of Christ a righteousness by which we must be saved; and wher~~e~~ver the Spirit is poured out, both these dwell and remain as an everlasting righteousness."⁷

17. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever."

Added to the blessings of justice and righteousness will be peace, quietness and confidence, effects of righteousness. Is. 26:3; Ps. 72:2-3; Phil. 4:6-9; James 3:17-18; Is. 11:6-9.

18. "And my people shall abide in a peaceable habitation, and in safe dwellings, and in quiet restingplaces."

In contrast to the false ease denounced in verses 9, 11, there is here a glorious promise of true, abiding peace and security to God's people, foreshadowing the words of Jesus to His disciples. "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions (or abiding-places) - - for I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14:1-2).

19. "But it shall hail in the downfall of the forest; and the city shall be utterly laid low."

This verse has been variously interpreted. The view of Delitzsch is that before the blessings pictured in the foregoing verses are real-

6. Delitzsch.

7. Matthew Henry.

ized two things must take place. 1) "It must hail, while at the same time the forest falls to the ground, smitten down by the hail. From 10:34 we know the forest to be an emblem of the Assyria, and the hail from 30:30 f. to be one of the nature-powers destroying Assyria. 2) The city must first sink in abasement, i.e., be deeply humbled." One view is that "the city" is Jerusalem, another that it is Ninevah, the capital of Assyria.

"However natural and probably certain applications of the passage may appear, the only sense which can with certainty be put upon it, is that some existing power must be humbled, either as a means or as a consequence of the moral revolution which has been predicted."⁸

20. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth the feet of the ox and the ass."

The restoration following the outpouring of the Spirit would be characterized not only by justice and righteousness, peace, quietness and confidence, but also by prosperity. (Compare Is. 30:23-25) Over against the trouble, thorns and briers of judgment and desolation (vs. 10-14), there shall be in the restoration happiness to those who diligently engage in the undisturbed cultivation of the land. Compare Is. 55:10-11; Mt. 13:3; I Cor. 3:6.

8. Alexander.

The Arm and Salvation of Jehovah. Chap. 33.

This chapter sets forth the effect of the arm and salvation of Jehovah upon the Assyrian destroyers (verses 1-12), and upon the dwellers in Jerusalem (verses 13-24). This mighty work of Jehovah brings destruction to the destroyer (1-12), terror to the sinners in Zion (13-14), security to the Righteous (15-16) and glory to Zion (17-24). The chapter evidently has reference to Sennacherib's invasion and the deliverance of Jerusalem by the interposition of Jehovah. In this prophecy there is clearly seen Jehovah exalted in might and majesty.

1. "Woe to thee that destroyest, and thou wast not destroyed; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! When thou hast ceased to destroy, thou shalt be destroyed; and when thou hast made an end of dealing treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee."

This is the last of a series of woes found in chapters 28-33. Dr. G. L. Robinson lists them as follows:

- (1) Woe to the drunken, scoffing politicians (ch. 28).
- (2) " " formalists in religion (29:1-14).
- (3) " " those who hide their plans from God (29:15-24).
- (4) " " the pro-Egyptian party (ch. 30).
- (5) " " those who trust in horses and chariots (ch. 31-32).
- (6) " " the Assyrian destroyer (ch. 33).

Violence and treachery were two outstanding sins of the enemy. This is evidently the last prophecy of Isaiah against Sennacherib. It was soon to be historically fulfilled. Compare such previous prophecies as Is. 10:12; 14:25; 31:8, and the historical record ch. 37:36-38.

2. "O Jehovah, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou our arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble."

A prayer for mercy (30:18-19); a prayer of faith (25:9; Lam. 3:26); a timely prayer, (Ps. 62:8; 46:1; 50:15).

"The arm is a symbol of strength. It is used in the Scriptures as emblematic of the divine protection, or of the interposition of God in time of calamity and danger."¹

3. "At the noise of the tumult the peoples are fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations are scattered."

Following prophecy and prayer, the prophet sees the answer in the interposition of Jehovah, causing dismay and defeat to the forces of the enemy. "The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered his voice, the earth melted." (Ps. 46:6). See also Ps. 68:1.

4. "And your spoil shall be gathered as the caterpillar gathereth: as locusts leap shall men leap upon it."

Taking up his address to the enemy, he tells them their spoil would be gathered by the victors just as eagerly and greedily and thoroughly as the caterpillars devour, and the locusts leap upon their spoil. (See Joel 2:9).

5. "Jehovah is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with justice and righteousness."

Prophecy and prayer in the foregoing verses are here followed by praise to the exalted Jehovah. The thought of Jehovah exalted is repeatedly found in Isaiah, and in this chapter especially. At the time of his vision and commission (ch. 6) he saw the Lord high and lifted up. Compare also 12:4; 57:15; 33:10; Ps. 46:10; 97:9; Dan. 4:37; Eph. 1:20-21. Immediately connected with His exaltation is His filling Zion with justice and righteousness (Is. 32:1; 15-18). When the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high justice and righteousness fill Zion.

6. "And there shall be stability in thy times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge: the fear of Jehovah is thy treasure."

These words are probably addressed, not to Hezekiah, as some think, or to the Messiah, but to the people of Judah. Further blessings coming from the exalted Jehovah are here enumerated. "Stability will characterize the condition of the times (Ps. 31:15), a continuously uniform, and therefore trust worthy state (Compare 39:8)"² Also they will have abundance of salvation (45:17), wisdom (Ecc. 9:14-18), knowledge (Isa. 11:9). The fear of Jehovah (Is. 11:3), the foundation of true religion, shall be their treasure. (Ps. 112:1-3; Mt. 6:33; I Tim. 6:6).

7. "Behold, their valiant ones cry without; the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly."

Here the prophet begins again the cycle of thought as in verse 1. The reference is evidently to the fact that Hezekiah sent an embassy to Sennacherib at Lachish to sue for peace, presenting silver and gold according to his conditions. 2 Kings 18:14-18. However, even this did not stop his march upon Jerusalem. Hence the failure of this embassy and the attending terror are causes for lamentation in Judah.

8. "The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: the enemy hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth not man."

The desolation in Judah because of the Assyrian invasion, and the wicked character of the invader are described in this verse. Roads were in ruin, travel stopped. The enemy had disregarded treaties, cities, and individuals.

9. "The land mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is confounded and withereth away; Sharon is like a desert; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves."

"The desolation is universal. That part of the country, which belonged to the ten tribes, was already laid waste; Lebanon famed for cedars, Sharon for roses, Bashan for cattle, Carmel for corn, all very fruitful, are now become like wildernesses."³

2. Delitzsch.

3. Matthew Henry.

10. "Now will I arise, saith Jehovah; now will I lift up myself; now will I be exalted."

In the midst of distress upon earth comes a determination in heaven. Note the speaker is Jehovah, not man. The words expressing His determination make a climax - arise, lift up, be exalted. Compare 59:16-17; Zeph. 3:8; Is. 30:18; Ex. 14:18; Ex. 15:9-12.

The time of His interposition is here emphasized by the word "now", used three times for special emphasis. The time of deepest distress, is when we may expect God's help. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

Note in this connection the prayer of verse 2, and compare Ps. 50:15.

11. "Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath is a fire that shall devour you."

In contrast to the almighty power of Jehovah are the vain efforts of the enemy. Chaff and stubble are worth little, and easily consumed. "Their plan to destroy Jerusalem comes to naught; their panting with rage against Jerusalem is the fire which consumes them."⁴ Their own sin shall be the means of their own destruction. Is. 1:31.

12. "And the peoples shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire."

These figures suggest the completeness and rapidity of the destruction of Jehovah's enemies. Compare the expression "burnings of lime" with Amos 2:1~~6~~, and the last expression of the verse with Is. 9:18, and 2 Sam. 23:6-7.

13. "Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might."

This is a call directed to all peoples to hear of the mighty works of God, such as were foretold in the foregoing verses, and to acknowledge his omnipotence. Rahab heard of His might (Josh. 2:9-11). Nebuchadnezzar and Darius acknowledged it (Dan. 3:27-30; 6:25-27). At Pentecost the Jerusalem Jews from every nation heard in their own tongues the mighty works of God. (Acts 2:5-11). "Praise him for his mighty acts." (Ps. 150:2a).

14. "The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling hath seized the godless ones: Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

There were sinners in Zion then as today - scoffers (28:14), hypocrites (29:13), rebellious (30:9). God's destruction of the Assyrian hosts, that awful judgment in one night, was probably what so terrorized the sinners in Zion. If such terrible judgments came upon the Assyrians who knew not God, how could the sinners in Zion, who had sinned against the light, and were therefore under greater condemnation, dwell with the everlasting wrath of God? Compare Is. 30:27, 30; Heb. 12:29

"Jehovah, as regards His wrath, is a consuming fire, Deut. 4:24; 9:3; and the fiery force of this wrath is everlasting burnings, in as much as it consists of flames never to be quenched. And this God has His fire and furnace in Jerusalem, 31:9, and has just shown what His fire can do when it breaks out."⁵

15. "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from taking a bribe, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil:"

(Prov. 15:21)

Here is a description of the character of a righteous man. Six things are told of him. (1) His conduct is good, like Zacharias and Elizabeth (Luke 1:6). (2) His words are good. (3) He is not a lover of money (Lu. 3:12-14), (4) He detests taking a bribe (I Sam. 12:3). (5) He guards his ears from evil (I Sam. 26:8-11). (6) He guards his eyes from evil (Ps. 119:37). Compare this description with: Ps. 1:1-3; 15:1-2; 24:4-5.

16. "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; his bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure."

The righteous man shall have both safety and sustenance. Compare Is. 32:18; Ps. 15:1; 90:1; 91:1-10, 14; Ps. 37:3; Mt. 6:33.

17. "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold a land that reacheth afar."

Further blessings of the righteous are mentioned in this and the following verses of this chapter, as the future glory of Zion is described. One of these blessings to be received is a vision of the King and the land. Hezekiah, having put off the sack cloth (Is. 37:1) would be exalted (2 Chron. 32:23); and the siege having been lifted the land of God's people could be seen. Here the prophet seems to have in mind Hezekiah as a figure or type of the Messiah, whom believers shall behold in his beauty. Isaiah had already had a vision of this King of glory (6:5). Compare Mt. 17:2; John 1:14; 17:24; I John 3:2. The believer also shall see by faith the promised land of the heavenly Canaan. 2 Cor. 4:18; Hebrews 11:13-15.

18. "Thy heart shall muse on the terror: Where is he that counted, where is he that weighed the tribute? where is he that counted the towers?"

Another blessing is the recollection of delivery from dangers of siege and oppression. "Sweet is the recollection of dangers that are passed."⁶ 2 Cor. 1:8-10; 2 Tim. 3:11. "He that counted, he that weighed", etc., probably refer to the Assyrian officials who exacted tribute and prosecuted the siege.

19. "Thou shalt not see the fierce people, a people of a deep speech that thou canst not comprehend, of a strange tongue that thou canst not understand."

5. Ibid.

6. Rosenmuller.

There shall be the disappearance of the fierce people with a strange tongue, (evidently a reference to the Assyrians). See 2 Kings 19:32. Compare a similar promise of the disappearance of Israel's enemy in Exodus 14:13.

20. "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be plucked up, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken."

There is here promised the peace and permanence of Zion, the city of the "festal assembly" or "set feasts". Compare Is. 32:18; Ps. 125: 1-2. Jerusalem is compared to a tent that is permanent. Compare 54:2 for same figure, and Mt. 16:18 for another figure for permanence of the church.

21. "But there Jehovah will be with us in majesty, a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby."

The glory of Zion will be the presence of Jehovah, bringing prosperity and protection. Compare Ps. 46:4-5.

"Jehovah's presence is to Jerusalem what the broadest rivers and canals are to other cities; and into these rivers and canals, which Jerusalem has in Jehovah, no oared ship ventures, no majestic warships can cross it: even such a colossus would founder in these dangerous, mighty waters."⁷

22. "For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our King, he will save us."

Our salvation is of Jehovah, our judge (2 Cor. 5:10), our lawgiver (James 4:12), our King (Jer. 23:5-6; Rev. 19:16). Compare the last clause with Is. 12:2; 25:9; Zeph. 3:15-17; Mt. 1:21; Lu. 2:11; Acts 5:31; Tit. 3:4-6; Hebrews 5:9. Jehovah "as judge watches over Israel's right and honour, as lawgiver bears the staff of command in Israel, and as King is enthroned and rules in Israel's midst, so that in Him it is provided beforehand with sure help against every future danger."⁸

23. "Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not strengthen the foot of their mast, they could not spread the sail: then was the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame took the prey."

In figurative language this verse seems to describe the enemy, the Assyrian power, as discomfited and plundered.

Some interpreters consider the address at the beginning of the verse, not to the enemy as a ship, but to Jerusalem as a shattered ship, referring to its present condition in contrast to its future glory.

Following the promised victory over the enemy their camp will be plundered by the Jews, even the lame taking their share of the prey. Compare 2 Kings 7:8.

7. Delitzsch.

8. Ibid.

24. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

At the conclusion of this chapter is this glorious promise of health and forgiveness, no more sickness and sin. It is Jehovah "who forgiveth all their iniquities, who healeth all thy desires." (Ps. 103: 3). See Ex. 15:26; 2 Chron. 30:20; Jer. 33:6-8; Mark 2:5-9; James 5:14; Rev. 21:4; 22:2; Is. 44:22; Jer. 50:20; Micah 7:18-19; I John 1:7-9.

"A people humbled by affliction, penitent, and therefore forgiven, they inhabit Jerusalem. Israel's strength and all its salvation rest on forgiveness of sins."⁹

The Arm and Salvation of Jehovah brings

1. Woe to the Assyrian Destroyer.
2. Terror to sinners in Zion.
3. Glorious blessings to the Righteous - verses 16-24.
 - (1) Safety and maintenance, vs. 16.
 - (2) Vision of the King and the land, vs. 17.
 - (3) Recollection of delivery from danger of ~~sege~~ and oppression, vs. 18.
 - (4) Disappearance of fierce people with strange tongue, vs. 19.
 - (5) Peace and permanence of Zion, vs. 20.
 - (6) Presence of Jehovah, bringing prosperity and protection, vs. 21.
 - (7) Salvation of Jehovah, the Judge, Lawgiver, King, vs. 22.
 - (8) The enemy discomfited and plundered, vs. 23.
 - (9) Health and forgiveness, vs. 24.

9. Ibid.

A Summary Prophecy of Desolation and Restoration. Chaps. 34-35.

This prophecy forms a fitting finale to chapters 28-33, as chapters 24-27 are to chapters 13-23. (Del.) It foretells universal judgment upon the nations (34:1-4), and particular judgment upon Edom (ancient enemy of Israel) in verses 5-15. "The destruction of the enemies of Zion and the desolation of their lands are represented by the figures of a great sacrifice or slaughter, the falling of the heavenly bodies, the conversion of the soil into brimstone, and the waters into pitch, and the inhabitation of animals peculiar to the desert."¹ The divine source, and certain fulfillment of this prophecy are emphasized in verses 15-17.

Chapter 35 gives a glorious picture of Restoration. Campbell Morgan says that in chapters 35, 40, 53, 55, "we have gathered the supreme values of this book of Isaiah. Chap 35 leads straight to chapter 40, while 40 finds its ultimate in 53, and 53 its result in 55." The thought of the chapter may be centered around three leading ideas:

1. A Change in the Wilderness, (verses 1-2).
2. A Call to the Weak, (verses 3-4).
3. The Culmination of the Way, (verses 5-10).

As to the application of the chapter Alexander says: "Without any change of its essential meaning, it may be applied to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, to the vocation of the Gentiles, to the whole Christian dispensation, to the course of the individual believer, and to the blessedness of heaven."

The two chapters develop the idea that the Church comes through desolation to restoration. See chap. 35:3-4 for a theme text. all

34:1. "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye peoples: let the earth hear, and the fulness thereof; the world, and things that come forth from it."

This summons is addressed to the nations and peoples to hear this prophecy. It is of universal concern. The last part of the verse "may either be explained as an appeal to inanimate nature, like the one at the beginning of the book, or as an appeal to men, poetically represented as the fruit of the earth, which is the sense given in the ancient versions."²

2. "For Jehovah hath indignation against all the nations, and wrath against all their host: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter."

The universality and completeness of the judgment of Jehovah are emphasized. All nations must drink of the cup of His wrath (Jer. 25: 15-29). Compare Zeph. 3:8; Rom. 1:18; Rev. 6:12-17; 14:15-20.

3. "Their slain also shall be cast out, and the stench of their dead bodies shall come up; and the mountains shall be melted with their blood."

1. Alexander.
2. Ibid.

This is a terrible picture of the slain, the stench, and streams of blood, resulting from the extensive slaughter. Compare Rev. 14:20.

4. "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf fadeth from off the vine, and as a fading leaf from the fig-tree."

Representative views of this passage may be stated briefly as follows:

"The context clearly shows that the terms used are poetical, and that here, as in chapter 13:10, the idea which they are all intended to convey is that of revolution, sudden, total, and appalling change."³

"The heaven, therefore the present structure of the world, dissolves into atoms, and is shut up as a book when read; and the stars fall down, as a faded leaf falls from the vine when stirred by a gentle breeze, as that which fades, that is, the faded leaf shaken off by the fig-tree. It is a vision of the last days, which is confirmed by the Lord, Mt. 24:29."⁴

Compare on this subject, 2 Peter 3:7-12, noting especially the practical application.

5. "For my sword hath drunk its fill in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Edom, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment."

"Sword" is frequently used as an expression for an instrument of vengeance. Gen 3:24; Deut. 32:41-42. The source and the object of vengeance are here set forth - Jehovah's wrath is determined in heaven and executed on earth upon the enemies of His church.

Edom or Idumea was the land "originally extending from the Dead Sea to the Red Sea; afterwards they obtained possession of the country East of Moab, of which Bozrah was capital. Petra or Selah, called Joktheel (2 Kings 14:7), was capital of South Edom. David subjugated Edom (2 Sam. 8:13-14). Under Jehoram they regained independence (2 Chron. 21:8). Under Amaziah they were again subdued, and Selah taken (2 Kings 14:7). When Judah was captive in Babylon, Edom, in every way exulted over her fallen mistress, and killed many of those Jews whom the Chaldeans had left and hence was held guilty of fratricide by God (Esau, their ancestor, having been brother to Jacob): this was the cause of the denunciation of the prophets against Edom. (Ch. 63; Jer. 49:7; Ezek 25:12-14; 35:3-15; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11-12; Obadiah 8, 10, 12-18; Mal. 1:3-4)."⁵

The Herods of New Testament times were Idumeans. The judgment here pronounced upon Edom is such as will come upon all the enemies of the Church. See I Cor. 16:22.

6. "The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Jehovah hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom."

3. Ibid.

4. Delitzsch.

5. J., F. and Brown.

God's indignation against Edom, and against its chief city, Bozrah, is presented under the figure of a great sacrifice or slaughter. Delitzsch points out that as in chapter 63 Jehovah is represented as the winepress treader, and the people as the grapes, so here He is represented as a sacrificer, and the nations as sacrificial animals.

7. "And the wildoxen shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls: and their land shall be drunken with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness."

The various animals mentioned for the slaughter are suggestive of the fact that all classes of people are included in the judgment of God upon sinners. Compare verses 6 and 7 with the picture of birds of prey invited to a feast in Rev. 19:17-18.

8. "For Jehovah hath a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion."

Jehovah has an appointed time for the destruction of His enemies, which are the enemies of his Church, the destruction of the foe and the deliverance of the friend. In the midst of the gore of Edom Jehovah has his eye upon the glory of Zion. Compare Is. 35:4; 61:2; Rev. 19:1-2.

9. "And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch."

The prophecy of judgment is further presented under the figure of fire. The streams turned into pitch become burning pitch, and the soil becomes brimstone, a picture similar to that of the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. See Gen. 19:28, and Jude 7.

10. "It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever."

This inextinguishable fire, and smoke ascending eternally vividly set forth the eternal punishment of the wicked, a truth repeatedly taught in the Bible. Jesus himself said, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life." (Mt. 25: 46), the duration of future punishment and future life being described by the same word - eternal. Compare Rev. 14:10-11. The thought of everlasting fire is further strengthened by the thought of eternal desolation. It is interesting to note the form of the curse in the last clause - no passing through the country forever, and to recall in this connection the historical fact that the Israelites were refused passage through Edom by the Edomites.

11. "But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it; and the owl and the raven shall dwell therein: and he will stretch over it the line of confusion, and the plummet of emptiness."

The idea here is that of desolation, a place not inhabited by man, but by wild and solitary animals. Compare Mal. 1:3-4.

"The plummet is here mentioned as a parallel to line, both together expressing the idea of exact and careful measurement. The sense of the whole metaphor may then be either that God has laid this work out for himself and will perform it, or that in destroying Edom he will act with equity and justice, or that even in destroying he will proceed deliberately, and by rule."⁶ "Confusion" and "emptiness" are the same words as used to describe the primeval chaos in Gen. 1:2.

12. "They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there; and all its princes shall be nothing."

Added to the desolation is the fact that there shall be no leadership for the government. Either none ^{are} available or none ^{are} willing to try to govern in the midst of such waste and desolation.

13. "And thorns shall come up in its palaces, nettles and thistles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be a habitation of jackals, a court for ostriches."

Along with the fact that there will be no nobles and princes is the accompanying desolation of the palaces and fortresses which become a wilderness and habitation of wild animals. Compare Isaiah 32:13-14.

14. "And the wild beasts of the desert shall meet with the wolves, and the wild goat shall cry to his fellow; yea, the night-monster shall settle there, and shall find her a place of rest."

This gathering-place of the wild animals shall resound with the howling, the crying, and screeching of the various kinds of beasts and doleful creatures. Compare Is. 13:21.

15. "There shall the dart-snake make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shade; yea, there shall the kites be gathered, every one with her mate."

This solitary, dismal place is the breeding-place of reptiles and birds of prey.

"What a dismal change sin makes; it turns a fruitful land into barrenness, a frequented city into a wilderness."⁷

16. "Seek ye out of the book of Jehovah, and read: no one of these shall be missing, none shall want her mate; for my mouth, it hath commanded, and his Spirit, it hath gathered them."

The divine source, and certain fulfilment of this prophecy are emphasized. "When this destruction comes, compare the event with the prediction, and you will find it to answer exactly."⁸ "And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed . . . For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:19-21). "As the creative word comes from Jehovah's mouth, so the prophetic word which resembles it also comes from His mouth; and the breath of Jehovah's mouth, that is, His Spirit, is the power by which He, the Almighty One, carries out the second as the first creation."⁹

6. Alexander.
7. Matthew Henry.
8. Ibid.

17. "And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever; from generation to generation shall they dwell therein."

Jehovah, who has set the bounds of the habitations of all nations (Acts 17:26) has appointed as by divine lot and divine measuring-line Edom to be the dwelling-place of wild beasts and doleful creatures. *Edom, Echem*, a desolation is emblematical of God's judgment upon the enemies of His church. Before closing this prediction of the indignation of Jehovah against the nations, especially Edom, the prophet again emphasizes, by the use of the word 'forever', and the expression 'from generation to generation', the eternity of His judgment. (See vs. 10 and note, and 66:24).

(See introduction to Chap. 35 in connection with the introduction to Chap. 34.)

35:1. "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

The expression, "the wilderness and the dry land" evidently refers to moral and spiritual desolation, and is a picture of the condition of the world because of sin and the consequences of sin. This prophecy tells us that there will be a change in this wilderness. Instead of gloom there will be gladness, instead of barrenness there will be blossoming and beauty.

"After the Lord shall have punished the wickedness and crimes of men, and taken vengeance on Jews and Gentiles, the wilderness shall then be changed into a habitable country, and the face of the whole earth shall be renewed."¹⁰ Compare Is. 32:15-16; 40:3.

2. "It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God."

The beauty and joy mentioned in the foregoing verse are emphasized here, and there is added the idea of fertility. Then as a grand climax to the verse, the cause of the glorious change in the wilderness is expressed, namely the revelation of the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God. "The fulness of the whole earth is his glory." (Is. 6:3b) See also Is. 40:5; 60:1-3; Hab. 2:14; John 12:41; 17:24.

"God will manifest himself more than ever in his grace and love to mankind, (for that is his glory and excellency) and he shall give them eyes to see it, and hearts to be duly affected with it. This is that which will make the desert blossom. The more we see by faith of the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God, the more joyful and the more fruitful shall we be."¹¹

10. John Calvin.

11. Matthew Henry.

3. "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees."

Compare this call to the weak with Is. 40:1-2, and the words of Jesus to Peter in Luke 22:32, and the use of this verse in Heb. 12:12. The verse may be applied either to self-encouragement or to the comfort of others.

4. "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; he will come, and save you."

One of the great verses of the Bible on strengthening our weak brethren. It tells us to whom this ministry of consolation is to be directed, namely, "to them that are of a fearful heart," to the hasty, impatient hearts who are unwilling to wait for the fulfilment of God's promises, who are despondent and fearful. The message to the weak is (1) a call to courage - positively, be strong, (Joshua 1:6-7; Hag. 2:4; Eph. 6:10; I Tim 2:1), negatively, fear not, (Is 41:10; 43:1-6; Mark 4:40; Rev. 2:10). The message also contains a glorious promise of the coming of the Lord, and the purpose of His coming, deliverance from enemies - salvation. Is. 40:9, 10, 11; Mt. 1:21; Rev. 17:14.

5. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped."

The coming of the Savior will mean the healing of afflicted people - Sight and hearing come from Him, (See Prov. 20:12) both physical cure and spiritual discernment. Is. 42:16; Mt. 9:27-30; 11:3-5; Luke 4:18; John 9:1-7; Acts 9:17-18; 26:18.

6. "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."

"Then" as in the foregoing verse, points to the coming of the Savior promised in verse 4. It will be a time of great joy. The lame will leap praising God -(Mt. 15:30-31; Acts 3:2, 6-8). The dumb also shall sing praise (Ps. 51:15; Luke 1:64; Col. 3:16). This joy is further emphasized by the figure of waters in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Compare Ex. 17:11; Num. 20:11.

"There shall be waters and streams, rivers of living water; when our Savior spake of these, as the fulfilling of the scripture, and most probably of this scripture, the evangelist tells us, He spake of the Spirit (John 7:38-39) as does also this prophet; (Ch. 32:15). So here (vs. 6) in the wilderness, where one would least expect it, shall waters break out."¹² See also Is. 44:3 where the thought of water and the Spirit is more closely connected.

7. "And the glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water: in the habitation of jackals, where they lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes."

"Glowing sand" in R. V. margin is "mirage." According to Webster a mirage is "an optical illusion, at sea or in deserts, due to total reflection of light at the surface common to two strata of air differently heated. The reflected image is seen, commonly in an inverted position, while the real object may or may not be in sight." The transformation in the desert here pictured means that instead of the glowing sand, or the mirage to deceive, there will be the real pool of refreshing water, and instead of the thorns and thistles (34:13) there shall be grass, or a court or habitation for reeds and rushes. The Hebrew word for grass and court is the same word, hence the alternative translation.

8. "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for the redeemed: the wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err therein."

This verse presents (1) the prophecy of a highway (Compare 11:16; 19:23; 40:3-4; 42:16; 49:11-12; John 14:6; Heb. 10:20); (2) the place of the highway, through the wilderness; (3) the appellation of the highway; (4) the purity of the highway (Eph. 2:10; I Thess. 4:7; Tit. 2:11-14); (5) the prohibition of the highway (52:11; 60:21; Rev. 21:27); (6) the purpose of the highway. Another proposed rendering of the expression "but it shall be for the redeemed," is "for He shall be with them." (Compare Ps. 23:4; Rev. 7:15-17). (7) Finally this verse presents the plainness of the highway (Ps. 119:130; Prov. 4:18; John 7:17; I John 2:20, 27).

9. "No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon; they shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:"

Continuing the picture of the highway of holiness there is here suggested (8) the protection of the highway (11:6-9), (9) The privilege of the highway given to the redeemed, "Christ redeemed us" (Gal. 3:13a) See also Tit. 2:14; I Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9; (10) Finally the progress on the highway is suggested by the words, "shall walk". Ours is not only a holy calling (Eph. 1-3) but also a holy walk (Eph. 4-6).

10. "And the ransomed of Jehovah, shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

There shall also be (11) praise on the highway by the ransomed of Jehovah (Ps. 95:1-2; Rev. 15:2-4; Rev. 19:1-7). The glorious description of the way of holiness closes with a beautiful view of (12) the place at the end of the highway - Zion, the prepared city (Heb. 11:16); the place of perpetual joy, and plenteous redemption. (Rev. 7:9-17).

The Way of Holiness - Is. 35:8-10.

1. The Route (1) Through the desert; (2) A simple route.
2. The Travellers (1) Those prohibited (2) Those privileged.
3. The Destination - Zion - this word used 47 times in Isaiah and 161 times in whole Bible. Compare Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 7:9-17.

"I walk with the King. Hallelujah!"

Isaiah and Hezekiah Chapters 36-39.

This "historical interlude" (Campbell Morgan) separates the two main parts of the book of Isaiah, making an appropriate appendix to the one, and introduction or preface to the other. Two historical figures are quite prominent in the section, namely, Isaiah the prophet and Hezekiah the king; and three historical events, namely, the invasion and defeat of Sennacherib, the sickness and recovery of Hezekiah, and the arrival in Jerusalem of the embassy of Merodach-baladan. History, prophecy and song are intermingled. Moulton calls this section "The Ministry of Isaiah under Hezekiah." This record and the one found in 2 Kings, chapters 18-20, are in substance almost the same, and the record in 2 Chron. 32, quite similar. Each narrative may have been copied from the writings of one author, Isaiah.

Hezekiah's Enemy - Chapter 36

The thought of this chapter centers largely around Hezekiah's public enemy, Sennacherib and his officer, Rabshakeh. For a theme-text we suggest Ps. 74:10, "How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?" We are told (1) of Sennacherib's invasion with accompanying events (verses 1-3); (2) the defiant speech of Rabshakeh to Hezekiah's representatives (4-10); (3) the request of Hezekiah's men, and its refusal by Rabshakeh (11-12); (4) the defiant speech of Rabshakeh to the multitude (13-20); (5) the effect (21-22).

36:1 "Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and took them."

Many attempts have been made to explain this date. One of these attempts is to take the phrase at the beginning of this verse "as a general chronological caption for the entire section, with special reference to chapter 38, which tells of Hezekiah's sickness, which actually fell in his fourteenth year (714 B.C.) and which, coupled with Sargon's expected presence at Ashdod, was the great personal crisis of the king's life." "Chronologically chapters 38-39 preceded chapters 36-37. This is probably due to the fact that chapters 36-37, which describe the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701 B.C., explain and appropriately conclude chapters 1-35; whereas, chapters 38-39, which record Hezekiah's sickness (714 B.C.) and Merodach-baladan's embassy of congratulation upon his recovery (712 B.C.), fittingly introduce chapters 40-66." (See "The Book of Isaiah" by G. L. Robinson, pages 119-120). For previous references to the Assyrian invasion see Isaiah 7:17; 8:7-8; 10:28-32 etc.

2. "And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field."

Note the three verses inserted between this verse and the next in the narrative in 2 Kings 18:13-16, and the addition to the narra-

tive found in 2 Chronicles 32:1-8.

"Rabshakeh" was the title of an Assyrian officer. Sennacherib evidently made two attempts in quick succession to force Jerusalem to surrender, the first from Lachish, (an important Judaean fortress controlling the road to Egypt), with a great army (36:2-37:8); and the second from Libnah with defiant speech and fear propaganda carried by his messengers (37:9-38).

3. Then came forth unto him Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder."

Note that in the parallel account in 2 Kings 18:18 there is the introductory expression "And when they had called to the king", "They" referring to Rabshakeh and the other Assyrian officers who accompanied him (2 Kings 18:17).

Chap. 22:15 ff., foretells that Shabna was to be replaced by Eliakim as Hezekiah's chief minister. (See notes on chap. 22:15-25). Here we see the fulfilment, with Shabna occupying a lower position.

4. "And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?"

Rabshakeh begins his defiant speech in which he emphasizes the might of Assyria, and seeks to destroy confidence in Hezekiah, in Egypt and in Jehovah. Compare the spirit of this speech with that of Nebuchanezzar (Dan. 4:30), and Herod (Acts 12:22-23).

5. "I say, thy counsel and strength for the war are but vain words: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou hast rebelled against me?"

One interpretation of this verse is "Your pretended strength and wisdom are mere talk, false pretension" with particular allusion not so much to Hezekiah's prayers as to his words in 2 Chron. 32:6-8.¹ Barnes says that these words are "designed to show to Hezekiah that his reliance, either on his own resources or on Egypt, was vain."

6. "Behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust on him."

Assuming that Hezekiah is looking to Egypt for aid Rabshakeh says in effect that such confidence will do Hezekiah more harm than good.

7. "But if thou say unto me, We trust in Jehovah our God: is not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?"

1. Alexander.

"Rabshakeh's question evidently refers to Hezekiah's reformation of religious worship (2 Kings 18:4) which he erroneously regarded as a change of the national religion."² The heathen Assyrian might easily mistake these reforms as directed against Jehovah. "He did not seem to understand that all that Hezekiah had done was only to establish the worship of Jehovah in the land."³

8. "Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them."

Compare the spirit of this taunting challenge with that of Goliath (1 Sam. 17:40-43), and Sanballat and Tobiah (Neh. 4:2-5). He suggests the weakness of the Jews, in that they might not have even 2000 riders for the horses.

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

"The most unimportant captain in the army of Assyria commands more horsemen than this, and how can you expect to oppose even him, much more how can you be able to resist all the mighty army of the Assyrian?"⁴

10. "And am I now come up without Jehovah against this land to destroy it? Jehovah said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it."

It is possible that Sennacherib had heard the words of Isaiah 10:5-6, in which it is foretold that Assyria would be the instrument of God's wrath - Or, it may be that the Assyrian is here claiming divine authority for this invasion merely to terrify the Jews.

11. "Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people, that are on the wall."

The purpose of this request of Hezekiah's men was to prevent the multitude of Jews on the wall from understanding the words of Rabshakeh. They wished to avoid the bad effect it might have in terrorizing the people.

12. "But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, to eat their own dung, and to drink their own water with you?"

The request is harshly answered, the last clause of this verse is gross and indelicate language suggesting the horrors of famine. Compare 2 Chron. 32:11.

2. Ibid.

3. Barnes.

4. Ibid.

13. "Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the King of Assyria."

In a defiant spirit, like Goliath before the armies of Israel, I Sam 17:8-11, he disregarded the request of Hezekiah's men, and purposely lifted his voice and spoke in the Jew's language for the multitude to hear.

Note that he repeatedly refers to Sennacherib as the great king, and repeatedly leaves off the title of king to Hezekiah.

14. "Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he will not be able to deliver you:"

He tries to destroy the confidence of the Jews in their king Hezekiah, suggesting that he is deceptive and weak.

15. "Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah, saying, Jehovah will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria."

He makes a special effort to undermine their confidence in Jehovah. "The enemies of God's people cannot succeed in their designs against them until they can unsettle their confidence in Him."⁵ The three Hebrew children believed that God was able to deliver them (Dan. 3:15-17), as did Daniel also (Dan. 6:20-23), and all of them were gloriously delivered.

16. "Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make your peace with me, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;"

In a previous verse he had suggested the horrors of famine (vs. 12). Such would be expected to attend a siege of the city. In this verse he suggests the advantage of surrender - the privilege for a time of peace, security and happiness in their own land.

17. "Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards."

The prospect of being deported is made to appear more attractive by the added promise that the land of their deportation would be like Canaan. The purpose of all this talk was to try to cause them to surrender.

18. "Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, Jehovah will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the King of Assyria?"

He continues to try to shake the confidence of the people in their king, Hezekiah, and in Hezekiah's God. He infers that since

the gods of the nations were powerless before the King of Assyria, so would be Jehovah the God of Israel. Compare Ps. 115:2-8, and Dan. 3:15.

19. "Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?"

See notes on chapter 10:9-11. Sepharvaim was probably in the south of Mesopotamia in the vicinity of Hamath and Arpad. From this place came colonists to Samaria. (2 Kings 17:24) We are told that Sepharvaim was the seat of the worship of the sun-god, Sippar, and that Annuit, wife of the god of the sky, was also especially worshipped there. (Davis Bible Dictionary)

20. "Who are they among all the gods of these countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?"

By comparing verses 10 and 20 note how inconsistent Rabshakeh is in his speech concerning Jehovah, in one place claiming the authority of Jehovah, in the other place putting Jehovah on a level with gods of other nations who were powerless before Assyria. Note also the fuller parallel account in 2 Chron. 32:13-15, 16, 18, 19, and compare attitude of Pharaoh (Ex. 5:2), and Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 3:15).

21. "But they held their peace, and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not."

Both obedience and wisdom are shown in this silence. Compare Ex. 14:14; Amos 5:13; Mt. 7:6.

22. "Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh."

Rending of clothes was a common sign of grief among the Jews. "The causes of their griefs were the insolence and arrogance of Rabshakeh; the proposal to surrender the city; the threatening of the siege on the one hand and of the removal on the other, and the blasphemy of the name of their God, and the reproach of the king. All these things filled their hearts with grief, and they hastened to make report to Hezekiah."⁶

6. Ibid.

Hezekiah's Encouragement - Chap. 37.

This chapter completes the narrative relating to the invasion of Sennacherib begun in the previous chapter. In chapter 36 is found recorded much of peril, in chapter 37 much of prayer. The one tells much of Hezekiah's enemy, the other of Hezekiah's encouragement. In chapter 37 we are told of his faith in God (verses 1-4); the comforting message from God through Isaiah (verses 5-7); the challenge to faith (verses 8-13); the prayer of Hezekiah (verses 14-20); the comforting answer (verses 21-35); and the fulfilment of prophecy (verses 36-38). Two verses may be considered as a theme text for the chapter: "And Hezekiah the king, and Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, prayed because of this, and cried to heaven." (2 Chron. 32:20); "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." (Ps. 50:15).

37:1. "And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Jehovah."

For reasons for grief see notes on chap 36:22. Sackcloth is frequently mentioned in scripture in connection with humiliation repentance and grief, (2 Kings 22:11; Jon. 3:5-6), as a mark or sign of the same. Hezekiah's resort to the house of Jehovah in time of trouble was in keeping with Solomon's prayer in I Kings 8: 33-34. King Hezekiah here gives us an illustration of what to do in time of trouble.

2. "And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz."

"The king applies to the prophet as the authorized expounder of the will of God. Similar applications are recorded elsewhere with sufficient frequency to show that they were customary and that the prophets were regarded in this light. Thus Josiah sent to Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Zedekiah to Jeremiah (Jer. 37:3), etc."¹

3. "And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of contumely; for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth."

Hezekiah's message to Isaiah shows that he realizes the great distress brought upon his people, that it was rebuke or chastisement (Hos. 5:9; Rev. 3:19), and that they did not have the strength in themselves to meet the crisis.

4. "It may be Jehovah thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to defy the living God, and will rebuke the words which Jehovah thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left."

1. Alexander.

Realizing the efficacy of intercessory prayer, that "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working" (James 5:16b), Hezekiah sends to Isaiah this request for prayer. Note other Old Testament intercessors like Abraham (Gen. 18:23ff), Moses (Ex. 32:31ff), and Samuel (1 Sam. 12:19). The object of the prayer is the remnant, so often mentioned in Isaiah. See verses 31, 32; chap. 1:9; 10:20-22, and Rom 9:27.

5. "So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah."

Note the frequent mention of Hezekiah's servants in this narrative, and the important part they have to perform. Compare 36:3, 11, 22; 37:2.

6. "And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me."

Following the message from Hezekiah recorded in verses 3-4, is the message from Isaiah in verses 6-7, giving the comforting words of Jehovah himself. They contain first, a summons not to fear, (Compare Is. 10:24-25; 35:4; 41:10; Mark 4:40; 5:36), and second, a promise of deliverance (vs. 7).

7. "Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings, and shall return unto his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."

A common interpretation is that this was ^aspirit of fear put in him upon his hearing of the approach of Tirhakah (See verse 9). This verse is in keeping with repeated prophecies in Isaiah of the overthrow of Judah's enemy. Compare 10:16-18; 10:33-34; 17:13-14; 29:5-8; 30:28-33; 31:8-9; 33:10-12.

8. "So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah; for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish."

Libnah is thought to have been about ten miles from Lachish. Both were cities taken by Joshua (Joshua 10:29-32). Having received no response from Hezekiah's men at Jerusalem Rabshakeh returned to his master's camp.

9. "And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come out to fight against thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah saying,"

Tirhakah was a celebrated conqueror who ruled over Egypt for eighteen years. The purpose of Sennacherib evidently was to get Hezekiah to surrender Jerusalem before the arrival of Tirhakah.

10. "Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria."

In Rabshakeh's defiant speech (36:4, 15, 20) he had sought to undermine the confidence of the people in Hezekiah and Jehovah. In this letter Sennacherib seeks to undermine the confidence of the king, Hezekiah, in Jehovah. Hezekiah's trust in Jehovah was well known. (2 Kings 18:5; 2 Chron. 32:7-8).

11. "Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?"

Emphasis upon the pronoun "thou" may bring out the meaning of the verse. Even if the people have not heard, behold thou, as king hast heard. And shalt thou be delivered when all these other lands have fallen before the conquerors of the world?

12. "Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden that were in Telassar?"

Gozan was in Mesopotamia (2 Kings 17:6; 18:11). Haran, also in Mesopotamia, is mentioned in the history of Abraham, Gen 11:31-32. Rezeph was probably farther west in Syria. Eden means pleasure or delight. In this connection it is difficult to tell whether it refers to the name of a person or a place. This name seems to have been given to various places. (Gen. 2:8; Ezek. 27:23-24). The region of Eden is mentioned in Assyrian documents by the name Bit-Adini, situated on both sides of the Euphrates north of the Belila river. (See Davis' Bible Dictionary). The reference in this verse is probably to this region. Telassar, not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, may have been a city of Mesopotamia not far from the Euphrates.

13. "Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah?"

The first three places are mentioned by Rabshakeh in 36:19, where he refers to their gods. Little is known about Hena and Ivvah. See 2 Kings 17:24; 18:34; 19:13. These words end the challenge to the faith of Hezekiah.

14. "And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up unto the house of Jehovah, and spread it before Jehovah."

Note the four verbs of action telling us that Hezekiah received the letter, read it, resorted to the house of Jehovah, and referred the letter to Jehovah to answer it. An excellent example of what to do in the time of trouble! Compare 37:1-4; Ps. 46:1; I Pet. 5:7.

15. "And Hezekiah prayed unto Jehovah, saying,"

Compare Samuel (1 Sam. 7:8-9), David (2 Sam. 7:18-29), Asa (2 Chron. 14:11; 20:6-12), Daniel (Dan. 9:3-4).

Note Hezekiah's recognition of the power and glory of the only true God, Ruler and Creator of all; - 177 - in contrast to the blasphemies of the Assyrians who would put Jehovah on a level with the gods of the nations. 206

16. O Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, that sittest above the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth."

For meaning of "Jehovah of hosts" see notes on chap 1:9. The cherubim "symbolized the presence and unapproachability of Jehovah whose glory was manifested between them."² "The cherubim were symbolical representations of the superhuman orders of beings, or, as some suppose, of the perfection of the creature in its highest form. Whether Jehovah's riding on the cherubim (Ps. 18:10) or his being enthroned above the material cherubs in the temple, or his dwelling between the cherubim (Ex. 25:22) be specifically meant, there is obvious allusion to his manifested presence over the mercy-seat called by the later Jews shechinah, which word is itself used in the Chaldee paraphrase of the verse before us."³

17. "Incline thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to defy the living God.

The burden of Hezekiah's prayer was that "God would vindicate his own honor, and save his name from reproach."⁴ He emphasizes here, as in verse 4, that Jehovah is the living God, in contrast to the gods of the nations.

18. "Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the countries, and their land,"

Hezekiah acknowledges that the kings of Assyria had been victorious in other countries. There was truth in that much of the boast of Sennacherib.

19. "And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them."

Their gods were destroyed because they were no gods. They were of corruptible material, and they were made by the hands of man. Compare 36:18-20; 40:19-21..

20. "Now save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art Jehovah, even thou only."

"A supreme regard to the glory of God influenced this pious monarch in his prayers, and we have here a beautiful model of the object which we should have in view when we come before God. It is not primarily that we may be saved; it is not as the leading motive, that our friends, or that the world be saved; it is that the name of God may be honored."⁵ Compare Elijah's prayer on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:36-37).

2. Davis' Bible Dictionary.

3. Alexander

4. Barnes.

5. Ibid.

21. "Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria,"

"Isaiah's last 'word' concerning Assyria (37:31-35) is one of the prophet's grandest predictions. It is composed of three parts: (1) a Taunt-song, in elegiac rhythm, on the inevitable humiliation of Sennacherib (vss. 22-29); (2) a short poem in different rhythm, directed to Hezekiah, in order to encourage his faith (vs. 30-32); (3) a definite prediction, in less elevated style, of the sure deliverance of Jerusalem (vs. 33-35). Isaiah's prediction was literally fulfilled."⁶

Hezekiah requested Isaiah to pray (vs. 4), he prayed himself (vss. 15-20), and God heard his prayer and gave a most comforting answer. Compare 2 Chron. 32:20; 38:3-6; 65:24; Dan⁹:23; Acts 4:31.

22. "This is the word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning him: The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee."

"The meaning of the whole verse, divested of its figurative dress, is that the people of God might regard the threats of the Assyrian with contempt."⁷ Compare Ps. 2:2-4.

23. "Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel."

Sennacherib had not only threatened the people of God, but his greatest sin was to defy and blaspheme the Holy one of Israel (10:20; 12:6; 17:7). Compare the spirit of Pharaoh (Ex. 5:2), the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:4), and the beast coming out of the sea (Rev. 13:1-6).

24. "By thy servants hast thou defied the Lord, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof; and I will enter into its farthest height, the forest of its fruitful field."

The blasphemous and boastful spirit of Sennacherib is here set forth and his confidence in his own strength to devastate the land. The "I" is here emphatic.

25. "I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt."

The "I" is emphatic again. This Oriental monarch continues to boast of his achievements and of his ability to overcome most difficult obstacles in the way of his conquests.

6. G. L. Robinson.

7. Alexander.

26. "Hast thou not heard how I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? now have I brought it to pass, that it should be thine to lay waste fortified cities into ruinous heaps"

These words of Jehovah to the Assyrian show that Jehovah is working out His purpose of old, using the Assyrian as His instrument (Isaiah 10:5, 15). Sennacherib meant it for evil, but God was overruling it for good to His people. Compare Genesis 50:20. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee. The residue of wrath shalt thou gird upon thee" (Psalm 76:10). See also Acts 2:23; 4:27-28.

27. "Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as a field of grain before it is grown up."

The inhabitants were easily conquered by Sennacherib not because of his great power, but because it was the purpose of God being brought to pass with the Assyrian as the rod of his anger, and it was God who made them unable to stand before the Assyrian.

28. "But I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy raging against me."

Not only does Jehovah "foreordain whatsoever comes to pass", but he is also omniscient. He knows all of the ways of a man. Psalm 139:1-12.

29. "Because of thy raging against me, and because thine arrogancy is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest."

The address to Sennacherib teaches not only God's foreordination, and omniscience, but also his omnipotence. Even such a powerful monarch as Sennacherib was under his complete control. Jehovah would cause his defeat and flight. "Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth". (Revelation 19:6b).

30. "And this shall be the sign unto thee; ye shall eat this year that which groweth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof".

Turning from the address to Sennacherib these words are addressed to Hezekiah. As a sign was given to Ahaz (7:14), and to Hezekiah on another occasion (38:7), so one is given him here. According to Delitzsch the point and purpose of the sign are as follows: "The point, then of the sign here is this, that the plan of Sennacherib against Judah will as certainly be wrecked as that no regular sowing and reaping will take place before the third year from now, but then will be again possible..The purpose of the

sign was to confirm King Hezekiah in rejecting Sennacherib's demand."

"This year, the year of the invasion, since the harvest has been destroyed, they must eat the aftergrowth. Since they have not been able to sow this year, next year they must depend upon what grows of itself, but the year after they will be able to sow and reap freely, for the land will be free from enemies".⁸

Another explanation of these words is that "most probably the year in which these words were uttered was a sabbatical year, and the next year the year of Jubilee, during neither of which the Jews were allowed to cultivate the ground, so that the resumption of tillage was of course postponed to the third".⁹

31. "And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward."

Prayer for the remnant was requested in verse four. Here is a prophecy of the prosperity of the remnant. Romans 9:27; 11:5.

32. "For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of mount Zion they that shall escape. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this."

What is foretold figuratively in the foregoing verse is expressed literally in this verse, the doctrine of the remnant, so characteristic of Isaiah. For the last expression compare notes on 9:7.

33. "Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it".

Verses 33-35 give a more particular prophecy of the deliverance of Jerusalem from storm and siege by Sennacherib.

34. "By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come unto this city, saith Jehovah."

This repeats the similar prophecy found in verses 7 and 29, while the prophecy of the thirty-third verse that Sennacherib shall not come unto this city is here repeated.

35. "For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake".

In the defense and deliverance of Jerusalem, God considered the glory and honor of his own name, since Sennacherib had defied and blasphemed him (verse 23), also the promise he had made to David. (See II Samuel 7:12, 13; I Kings 15:4).

8. Dummelow.

9. Alexander.

36. "And the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies."

This is a brief account of one of the most extraordinary events of history, when in a single night the angel of Jehovah smote 185,000 Assyrians. It is comparable to that night when the first-born of Egypt were slain (Exodus 12:12,23). The enemy was destroyed. God's people were delivered.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

37. "So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh."

This flight of Sennacherib had been predicted in verses 7 and 29. He departed, went, returned, and dwelt. According to the inscriptions he dwelt at Nineveh for 20 years following this defeat. Nineveh, situated about 250 miles north of Babylon, was founded by Nimrod (Genesis 10:11). "When Nineveh became the capital of Assyria is not definitely known, but it is generally believed it was during the reign of Sennacherib. The prophecies of the books of Jonah and Nahum are chiefly directed against this city. The latter prophet indicates the mode of its capture. Nahum 1:8; 2:6; 2:8; 3:18. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria during the height of the grandeur of that empire, and in the time of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Assurbanipal. It was besieged for two years by the combined forces of the Medes and Babylonians, was captured, and finally destroyed B. C. 606"¹⁰

38. "And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead."

After defying the true and living God, and while in the act of idolatry, the life of Sennacherib was brought to this tragic end. Compare the terrible death of Herod, Acts 12:22,23. It has been supposed that Esar-haddon was his favorite son, and that the other two sons were angry with their father because of this partiality. Esar-haddon was the only Assyrian king who actually ruled in Babylon. During his reign extending from B. C. 680 to 667, Manasseh, King of Judah, was taken prisoner by his captains and carried before him at Babylon and kept a captive for some time.¹¹

What to do in Time of Trouble

37:1-4, 14-20; 38:1-3

1. Realization of trouble

10. Schaff's Bible Dictionary

11. Ibid.

2. Repentance
3. Resort to House of Jehovah
4. Request for Prayer
5. Refer the case to Jehovah

Hezekiah's Extremity Chapter 38

This chapter tells of Hezekiah's sickness unto death and his miraculous recovery in answer to prayer, followed by his psalm of thanksgiving. A parallel account with variations is found in II Kings 20:1-11. Hezekiah's song of thanksgiving is found only in Isaiah 38:9-20.

In particular, this chapter tells of Hezekiah's serious sickness (verse 1), his supplication and weeping (verses 2, 3), God's promise of the prolongation of his life and sign of same (verses 4-8), Hezekiah's song, (verses 9-20), Isaiah's prescription (verse 21), and Hezekiah's question regarding the sign (verse 22). A theme text for the chapter may be found in James 5:13, "Is any among you suffering? let him pray. Is any cheerful? let him sing praise".

38:1. "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."

It is difficult to ascertain the time of his sickness; some think it was before the Assyrian invasion, some that it was connected with it, others that it was later. See note on verse 36:1. At the time of this serious sickness Hezekiah was about thirty-eight years old. "The passage affords a striking illustration of the conditional nature of prophetic utterance, for at Hezekiah's intercession the sentence was revoked."¹ Compare Jonah 3:4.

38:2. "Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto Jehovah,"

The announcement of the prophet called for preparation. The way in which this was done by Hezekiah was through prayer. (James 5:13a) Compare John 11:1-5. When Lazarus was sick his sisters sent to Jesus. See also Psalm 91:15.

38:3. "And said, Remember now, O Jehovah, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore."

Compare the words of this prayer with the account given of Hezekiah in II Kings 18:3-5; II Chronicles 31:20,21. Note other instances of supplication and weeping, as in the cases of Ezra, (Ezra 10:1), Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:4), Jacob (Hosea 12:4), Jesus (Hebrews 5:7).

Hezekiah's deep grief was no doubt because he was still in the prime of manhood, and particularly because at that time he had no son and heir to the throne. The Messianic kingdom seemed to be threatened (39:7; cf. II Kings 21:1)

1. Dummelow.

4. "Then came the word of Jehovah to Isaiah saying,"

The parallel account in II Kings 20:4 reads, "And it came to pass, before Isaiah was gone out into the middle part of the city, that the word of Jehovah came unto him saying," The added expression in Kings suggests how quickly the prayer must have been answered. Isaiah 65:24.

5. "Go, and say to Hezekiah, thus saith Jehovah, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy fears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years."

Note the fuller account in II Kings 20:5, "The prophet was got but to the middle court, when he was sent back with another message to Hezekiah, verses 4,5, to tell him that he should recover; not that there is with God yea or nay, or that he ever says and unsays, but upon Hezekiah's prayer, which he foresaw, and which his Spirit inclined him to, God did meet for him which otherwise he would not have done." God calling Hezekiah "the prince of my people," remembered his covenant with Daniel, heard and abundantly answered Hezekiah's prayer.

6. "And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the King Of Assyria; and I will defend this city."

The parallel account in II Kings 20:6 adds, "for mine own sake, and for my servant, David's sake", and immediately following is found the statement and question of verses 21, 22. Compare Isaiah 31:4,5; 37:35; II Chronicles 32:22; II Timothy 4:17, 18.

7. "And this shall be the sign unto thee from Jehovah, that Jehovah will do this thing that he hath spoken."

This was evidently the sign requested in verse 22. See II Kings 20:8-11 for fuller account; compare 7:11-14 and 37:30 for other instances of signs.

8. "Behold, I will cause the shadow on the steps, which is gone down on the dial of Ahaz with the sun, to return backward ten steps. So the sun returned ten steps on the dial whereon it was gone down."

In response to the request of Hezekiah, and the cry of Isaiah this miracle was performed, - "An extraordinary event in the external world wrought by the immediate power of God". Compare Joshua 10:12-14.

9. "The writing of Hezekiah King of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness."

2. Matthew Henry.

3. R. A. Webb.

This verse forms the inscription to the song of thanksgiving of Hezekiah recorded only in this chapter. "The poem, like many of the Psalms, is a record of individual experience, but adapted for use in the Temple worship (verse 20). The experience is that of a man who has been brought face to face with death, who has prayed for life, and has been heard in that he feared."⁴ Verses 10-14 describe the despondency in the face of death; verses 15-20 the delight at the prospect of continued life.

10. "I said, in the noontide of my days I shall go into the gates of Sheol: I am deprived of the residue of my years."

Hezekiah was about thirty-eight years old when he was brought face to face with death. Sheol is repeatedly used in the Bible with reference to the "state or abode of the dead". The thought of the verse is similar to Psalm 102:24, "I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: Thy years are throughout all generations".

11. "I said, I shall not see Jehovah, even Jehovah in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world."

"He reckoned that he was deprived of all the opportunities he might have had of worshipping God, and doing good, in the world".⁵

12. "My dwelling is removed, and is carried away from me as a shepherd's tent: I have rolled up, like a weaver, my life; he will cut me off from the loom: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me."

Continuing the thought of departure from this life he compares it to the removal of a shepherd's tent, and the folding up of the completed web by the weaver. Compare Job 7:6.

13. "I quieted myself until morning; as a lion, so he breaketh all my bones: From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me."

Here is a further poetic description of the sufferer's⁷ agony and apprehension.

14. "Like a swallow or a crane, so did I chatter; I did moan as a dove; mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed be thou my surety."

In his affliction his voice giving expression to his grief was comparable to that of the plaintive notes of certain birds. Yet he, in the midst of his weakness, looked upward to God for help. "Be surety for thy servant for good". (Psalm 119:122a)

4. Skinner.

5. Matthew Henry.

15. "What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul."

The words of the first part of this verse "seem to denote surprise and gratitude at unexpected deliverance"⁶, and the last of the verse expresses his purpose to walk humbly the remainder of his life. "I will behave myself humbly in remembrance of my past sorrow and sickness from which I have been delivered by God's mercy".⁷

16. "O Lord, by these things men live; and wholly therein is the life of my spirit: Wherefore recover thou me, and make me to live".

"This exceedingly obscure verse is now most generally understood to mean, that life in general, and the life of Hezekiah in particular, was dependent on the power and promise of God. Upon them, the promise and performance implied in the verbs 'said' and 'did' of the preceding verse, they live, that is, men indefinitely"⁸ II Corinthians 4:17.

17. "Behold, it was for my peace that I had great bitterness: But thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back".

The thought of the first part of the verse is more fully developed in Hebrews 12:11. The purpose of chastisement was for good. The remainder of the verse in two striking figures presents the ideas of redeeming love and absolute pardon.

18. "For Sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth".

"Here, as often in the Psalms, the loss of the opportunity of praising God is urged as a reason, not only why he should be loth to die, but why God should preserve him". Psalm 6:5; 88:10, 11

19. "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: The father to the children shall make known thy truth."

"Only the living could praise God in that way to which the writer was accustomed and on which his eye is here fixed, with special reference, no doubt to the external service of the temple. The last clause must be taken in a general sense, as Hezekiah was himself still childless."¹⁰ Deuteronomy 6:7.

20. "Jehovah is ready to save me: Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments, all the days of our life ⁱⁿ the house of Jehovah".

6. Barnes.

7. Fausset.

8. Alexander.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

Recognizing Jehovah as his Savior he declares that they will praise him publicly and continually in the temple. Psalm 51:15; 145:2.

21. "Now Isaiah had said, Let them take a cake of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover".

Note that this and the following verse came earlier in the narrative in II Kings 20:7, 8. The means are here prescribed for Hezekiah's restoration from his sickness. Compare the use of means when the bitter waters were made/sweet at Marah (Exodus 15:22-26) where the account closes with Jehovah's statement, "For I am Jehovah that healeth thee".

22. "Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of Jehovah?"

See note on verse 7. The miracle in connection with the dial of Ahaz (verse 8) was evidently in answer to this request. Desire for recovery should be for the purpose of praising God. See John 5:14.

Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery

1. Prospect of Death.
2. Prayer and Weeping.
3. Promise of Prolongation of Life.
4. Performance of a Miracle.
5. Psalm of Thanksgiving.
6. Prescription for Malady.
7. Purpose of Recovery.

Hezekiah's Error - Chapter 39

Compare the parallel account in II Kings 20:12-19, also see II Chronicles 32:24-31.

The chapter tells (1) of the ² arrival of the embassy from Babylon (verse 1), (2) their reception by Hezekiah (verse 2), (3) Isaiah's interview with Hezekiah (verses 3,4), (4) the prophecy of the Babylonish captivity which is an introduction or dating of chapters 40-66 (verses 5-7), and (5) the reaction of Hezekiah (verse 8). James 4:6 may be considered as a theme-text for the chapter.

39:1 "At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, King of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he heard that he had been sick, and was recovered".

"This Merodach-baladan was a ⁸ King of the Chaldeans of the house of Yakin, and the most dangerous and inveterate foe of Sargon and his son Sennacherib, ⁸ Kings of Assyria, with whom he long and bitterly contested the possession of Babylon and the surrounding provinces". ¹

The purpose of the coming of the embassy was congratulatory. Also II Chronicles 32:31 mentions their scientific curiosity. Chaldean astronomers would be especially interested in the miracle of the sun-dial. Political motives may have added interest to the embassy. Merodach-baladan probably wanted Hezekiah to join in an alliance against Assyria.

2. "And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oil, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures; there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not"

II Kings 20:13 has, "and Hezekiah hearkened unto them". The kind of reception given the embassy is indicated by the fact that Hezekiah "was glad", that he showed them all his treasures, that he hearkened unto them. It may have been that he was flattered by the visit also that he was politically interested in a foreign alliance with Babylon against Assyria. Again such a wholesale display of his treasures to the strangers seemed to indicate both pride and folly. See II Chronicles 32:22-28 for further description of Hezekiah's wealth.

3. "Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon."

The coming of the prophet and his inquiries reveal his concern over the case, and they also bring it to light. Compare II Chronicles 32:31. Note that Hezekiah does not answer the first question as to what these men said, but the second one he does answer, as to their home.

4. "Then said he, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in my house have they seen; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them."

Note the frankness and honesty of this answer. Contrast the attitude of Asa (II Chronicles 16:7-10). As the questions of the foregoing verse might have suggested a rebuke or warning against a proposition of an alliance with idolators, so this question might have suggested a rebuke for the foolish display of the king's treasures to them. (Compare II Chronicles 32:25)

5. "Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts:"

"Isaiah's tone is threatening, because he sees in this thing a sin against Jehovah. It was not necessary to specify wherein the offense consisted: king and prophet understood each other perfectly. The reception of an embassy from the sworn enemy of the King of Assyria was in itself an act of rebellion likely to precipitate a conflict which Isaiah strove to avert; and the childish vanity displayed by Hezekiah, his pride in earthly resources, and his readiness to enter into friendly relations with the powers of this world, were tendencies against which Isaiah's ministry had been a continuous protest. All these tendencies sprang from a single root, the lack of that absolute faith in Jehovah as the all-sufficient guide and protector of the nation which was the fundamental article of Isaiah's political programme."²

6. "Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith Jehovah."

Referring to verses 6,7, G. L. Robinson says: "This final prediction of judgment is the most marvelous of all Isaiah's minatory utterances; because he distinctly asserts that not the Assyrians, who were then at the height of their power; but the Babylonians, shall be the instruments of the divine vengeance in consummating Jerusalem's destruction. There is absolutely no reason for doubting the genuineness of this prediction. In it we have a prophetic basis for chapters 40-66 which follow".

"The fulfilment of the prophecy began in the deportation of Manasseh (II Chronicles 33:11), but was described as something still prospective by Jeremiah (20:5), and whose days and in the reign of Zedekiah it was at length fully accomplished (II Chronicles 36:18). To the objection, that a national calamity of this description bears no proportion to the fault of Hezekiah, there is no need of any other answer than that Hezekiah's fault was not the cause but the occasion of the punishment which fell upon the people, or rather of its being so explicitly predicted in the case before us. The punishment of Hezekiah's individual fault was included in the punishment of Israel for national offenses."³

-
- 2. Cambridge Bible.
 - 3. Alexander.

7. "And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

The first part of this verse seems to indicate that Hezekiah had no children when this prophecy was uttered. See II Kings 21:1.

For record of fulfilment of this prophecy see II Chronicles 33:21:11; II Kings 24:12-16; Daniel 1:1-7.

8. "Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days."

This verse records Hezekiah's submission to God's judgment, acknowledging that it was right, and that Isaiah was Jehovah's rightful messenger. It also suggests his gratitude for the mercy extended to him. See II Chronicles 32:26. He learned humility - James 4:6.

✕The last part of this verse seems to indicate that the events recorded in chapters 38, 39 followed Sennacherib's invasion, since Hezekiah here says, "For there shall be peace and truth in my days". See notes on Chapter 36:1 and 38:1.

Isaiah's Ministry to Hezekiah

1. A Trustworthy Ministry - Hezekiah had confidence in Isaiah as a man of prayer (37:4), and as God's Mouth-piece. (39:8)
2. A Faithful Ministry - (1) when threatened by enemy (37) (2) in time of sickness (38), (3) in time of prosperity. (39)
3. A Fruitful Ministry - A means of strengthening the faith and devotion of Hezekiah.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTERS 40-66.

"It is admitted on all hands," says Barnes, "that the second part of Isaiah, comprising the prophecies which commence at the fortieth chapter, and which continue to the end of the book, is to be regarded as the most sublime, and to us the most important part of the Old Testament".

Referring to this section of Isaiah, Delitzsch has said, "In regard to the language, there is nothing in the Old Testament more finished, nothing more splendid. In regard to their contents, this trilogy of prophetic discourses is still more incomparable. It begins with a prophecy putting into the mouth of John the Baptist the theme of his preaching; it concludes with the prophecy of the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, beyond which even the last page of the New Testament Apocalypse cannot soar; and in the middle, 52:13-53, the suffering and exaltation of the Servant of God are announced as plainly as if the prophet had stood before the cross and seen the Risen One. Placing himself at the beginning of New Testament days, he begins like the New Testament Gospel; he describes further the death and new life of God's Servant as completed facts with clearness of Pauline preaching; he cleaves at last to the higher, heavenly world, like the Johannine Apocalypse; and all this without exceeding the Old Testament limits; but within these he is evangelist, apostle, and apocalypticist in one person".

"It may be safely asserted", says Moulton, "that nowhere else in the literature of the world have so many colossally great ideas been brought together within the limits of a single work".

Dr. J. A. Alexander says, "The prominent objects here presented to the Prophet's view are these five: 1. The carnal Israel, the Jewish nation, in its proud self-reliance and its gross corruption, whether idolatrous or only hypocritical and formal. 2. The spiritual Israel, the true Church, the remnant according to the election of grace, considered as the object of Jehovah's favor and protection but at the same time as weak in faith and apprehensive of destruction. 3. The Babylonish Exile and the Restoration from it, as the most important intermediate point between the date of the prediction and the advent of Messiah, and as an earnest or a sample of Jehovah's future dealing with his people both in wrath and mercy. 4. The Advent itself, with the person and character of Him who was to come for the deliverance of his people not only from eternal ruin but from temporal bondage, and their introduction into "glorious liberty". 5. The character of this new condition of the Church or of the Christian dispensation, not considered in its elements but as a whole: not in the way of chronological succession, but at one view; not so much in itself as in contrast with the temporary system that preceded it."

Dr. G. L. Robinson calls chapters 40-66, "Prophecies of Comfort, Salvation and of Future Glory awaiting Israel", and gives a brief analysis as follows: "Chapters 40-48. Deliverance from Captivity through Cyrus, promised by the infinite and incomparable Jehovah. Chapters 49-57. The sufferings of the Servant of Jehovah: this section ending like the former with the refrain, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked". (57:21; cf. 48:22) Chapters 58-66. The abolition of all national distinctions and the future glory of the people of God. Chapter 60 is the characteristic

Chapter of this section, as Chapter 53 is of the second, and chapter 40 of the first."

Campbell Morgan calls Chapters 40-66, "Prophecies of Peace" - The Purpose of Peace (40-48), The Prince of Peace (49-57), and The Programme of Peace (58-66).

For a statement of the Isaianic authorship of chapters 40-66, see "One Isaiah" in introduction to this commentary.

"The second part of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66, is prefaced and introduced by the historical section of the book, Chapters 36-39; especially by the words of Isaiah in 39:6,7. This is an introduction or dating of the following prophecies..

"These chapters are both alike and unlike the first thirty-five chapters in tone, color and spirit. They are similar in vocabulary, in illustration, in geographical and topographical setting, in floral and animal life, and in conception of the Deity, using the same Isaianic title for God, 'the Holy One of Israel' as the first part of the book. In fact the internal arguments for unity of authorship are ninety percent to ten percent, and most of the ten percent are rationalistic presupposition.

"But there is a difference in attitude and outlook. In the second part the prophet no longer looks with glad hope for the settlement of the ills of his day by the coming to the throne of a glorious King of Righteousness, and the early establishing of peace among the nations through his just reign. Righteousness and peace cannot come through moral or civic or national changes. The root of the evil is much deeper. The whole people has become corrupted, apostate and unworthy. The prophet has become saddened and disillusioned by the rejection of his message and the wilful covenant-breaking of his people. In his distress he turns from men and measures, from earthly kings and princes, to Jehovah Himself for the hope of the Promise.

"The subjective righteousness which, in the first part of the book he pleaded for in the hearts of king and people, has now become objective to them, the righteousness of Jehovah, which He alone can achieve and provide. This Paul saw² clearly as he wrote Romans 10:3; Philippians 3:9. Paul's answer to the problem, and Isaiah's are the same."¹

The Voices of Comfort and the God of all Comfort

Chapter 40

Chapter 40:1-11 may be considered a prologue to the second part of Isaiah - "The Book of Consolation". In this prologue are heard the four voices, called by G. L. Robinson (1) The Voice of Grace, verses 1, 2; (2) The Voice of Prophecy, verses 3-5; (3) The Voice of Faith, verses 6-8; (4) The Voice of Evangelism, verses 9-11. The first voice is a summons to preach comfort, the second to prepare for the Coming One, the third proclaims the perishableness of all flesh and the permanence of God's Word, the fourth points to the God of Comfort - "Behold, your God!" Verses 12-31 enlarge upon "the Incomparable Greatness of Jehovah", the Creator and Ruler (verses 12-26) and Giver (27-31), one of the greatest passages of the Bible on the nature of God.

In this chapter "the promise is a general one of consolation, protection, and change for the better, to be wrought by the power and wisdom of Jehovah, which are contrasted, first, with those of men, of nations, and of rulers, then with the utter impotence of idols. That the ultimate fulfilment of the promise was still distant, is implied in the exhortation to faith and patience".¹

1. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."

The "God of all Comfort" (II Corinthians 1:4) here repeats that characteristic message of grace. Compare Isaiah 35:3, 4; 61:2b; and 66:13. The personal pronouns, "my" and "your" suggest the covenant relation between God and Israel. Some consider "saith" as an imperfect expressing the idea of continued or insipient action. Calvin says it is future. "I consider the future tense, will say, as relating not only to the captivity in Babylon, but to the whole period of deliverance, which includes the reign of Christ".²

"The prefatory exhortation in this verse affords a key to the whole prophecy, as being consolatory in its tone and purpose. There is evident allusion to the threatening in Chapter 39:7. Having there predicted the captivity of Babylon, as one of the successive strokes, by which the fall of Israel as a nation and the total loss of its peculiar privileges should be brought about, the Prophet is now sent to assure the spiritual Israel, the true people of Jehovah, that although the Jewish nation should soon cease to be externally identified with the church, the church itself should not only continue to exist, but in a far more glorious state than ever. This is the 'people' here meant and this the 'comfort' wherewith they were to be comforted".³

2. "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins."

"Comfortably" here means "to the heart".

-
1. Alexander
 2. Calvin
 3. Alexander

"By speaking to the heart, we are to understand speaking so as to affect the heart or feelings, and also in accordance with the heart or wishes, that is ⁴what the person addressed desires or needs to hear. Jerusalem is here put for the church or chosen people, whose metropolis it was, and for whose sake the place itself was precious in the sight of God."⁴

The military figure, warfare, refers to "period of military service, appointed term of conscription", its immediate reference probably being to the time of captivity in Babylon. The voice of grace emphasizes that this appointed time of hard service is completed. The reason for this is that the sin problem has been settled. Compare Isaiah 12:1; 33:24; 43:25. Isaiah 53 tells of Him upon whom our iniquity has been laid.

One explanation of the last clause is that "they had suffered what was regarded by Jehovah as an ample expression of his displeasure for their national offences"⁵. Matthew Henry suggests, "That the end of her trouble is answered: She has received of the Lord double for the cure of all her sins, sufficient, and more than sufficient, to separate between her and her idols. True penitents have indeed, in Christ and his sufferings, received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins; for the satisfaction Christ made by his death was of such infinite value that it was more than double to the demerits of sin, 'for God spared not his own Son'."

3. "The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness, the way of Jehovah: make level in the desert a highway for our God."

"This was in the form of the usual proclamation of a monarch commanding the people to make a way for him to pass. Applied to the return of the exile Jews, it means that the command of God had gone forth that all obstacles should be removed. Applied to John it means that the people were to prepare for the reception of the Messiah: that they were to remove all in their opinions and conduct which would tend to hinder his cordial reception, or which would prevent his success among them".⁶

See Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23.

4. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain".

"Generally the meaning is that Israel is to yield itself to the God who is coming to deliver it, and to feel and act in a way worthy of His dignity and purpose".⁷

5. "And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it."

Following the preparation in the parousia the presence of Jehovah in majesty, power, and grace redeeming his people will be known unto all the nations. Not only Isaiah saw his glory (John 12:41), and the disciples saw his glory (John 1:14),

-
- 4. Alexander.
 - 5. Barnes.
 - 6. ibid.
 - 7. Del.

but "all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 52:10). ^{spiritual} "All flesh shall see it together" is a glorious missionary prophecy. Compare the "all flesh" of Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:16, 17.

Just as the deliverance of Israel from Babylon was known among the nations, so all nations shall know of the salvation thru the coming of the Messiah. (Isaiah 60:1-3, Luke 2:32)

6. "The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, what shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field".

"First, it ought to be observed, that he does not speak merely of the frailty of human life, but extends the discourse farther, so as to reduce to nothing all the excellence which men think they possess...Although men have some shining qualities, like flowers in the fields, yet the beauty and lustre quickly vanish and pass away".⁸

Compare Psalm 103:15,16; James 1:10,11; I Peter 1:24,25.

7. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of Jehovah bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass."

There ^{is} are here given a fact from the field of nature ^{with} and its explanation, followed by a comparison which connects it with the preceding and following verse, an obvious truth of the whole passage being the perishableness of all flesh.

8. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever."

"Men living in the flesh are altogether impotent, fragile, dependent; God, on the other hand (31:3) is the Almighty, Eternal, All-Controlling; and as He Himself is, so is His word, which is the setting and utterance of His will and thought".⁹ For the rescue of perishing men we have the word of God which liveth and abideth, the word of good tidings which we preach. Compare I Peter 1:23-25; Matthew 24:35; John 3:16; Matthew 4:4. The glory of Jehovah is revealed, the glory of the flesh is reduced to naught, the grace of ^{his} hath appeared.

9. "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up on a high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!"

Note is this verse the Herald, the Hearers, the Method, and the Message of Evangelism. One view which is confirmed by the Revised Version Text is that 'thou' is "the collective personification of the messengers who announce God's gracious purpose to Zion". Isaiah 52:10 seems to confirm this view that Zion is the recipient, rather than the announcer of the good tidings. Another view supported by the Revised Version margin is that Zion or Jerusalem is the herald. Isaiah 2:3b seems to confirm this reading. Many Bible scholars

8. Calvin.

9. Del.

prefer this alternate rendering of the Hebrew, such as Alexander, who applies it as follows: "Not only in the restoration from captivity, but in every instance of the Lord's return to his forsaken people, it is the duty of the church to communicate as well as to receive the joyful tidings". The hearers of this good news are the cities of Judah. The method of the herald must be that of clearness, conviction, and confidence. Compare Acts 2:14; 4:13,29; 5:41,42; Ephesians 6:19; Philippians 1:28,29. The good news message briefly stated is 'Behold your God!'. Compare John 1:29.

10. "Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and his arm will rule for him: Behold, his reward is with him and his recompense before him."

This verse, as well as what follows, expands the text of the evangelist of verse nine. Behold, your God! He will come as a strong Ruler. Behold, your King! "Christ executeth the office of a King in ^{subduing} ~~subduing~~ us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies".¹⁰ Compare Hebrews 2:14; I John 3:8; Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22; Philip-
pians 2:10-11; Revelation 17:14; 19:11-16; 20:11.

"Jehovah brings with him as well the retributive reward of the foes of His people as the gracious reward of the faithful of His people, whom He will recompense for their previous sufferings with over flowing gladness (see 62:11)"¹¹ Revelation 22:12.

11. "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young". Ezek. 34:23 and

The Ruler is also a Shepherd. "For out of thee shall come forth a governor, who shall be shepherd of my people Israel" (Matthew 2:6b) "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want." His loving provision for and protection of his flock are here emphasized, particularly his tender care of the young and weak. Compare the second part of the verse with Genesis 33:13, and the whole verse with John 10:11-16.

12. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?"

Behold, your God! His omnipotence is here emphasized. Compare Job 38:8-11; Psalm 102:25,26; Hebrews 1:10-12. Who but God can do all these things? And he can do them with the ease with which man handles the smallest things. "Away, then with all gross conceptions of God; for his greatness far exceeds all creatures, so that heaven, and earth, and sea, and all that they contain, however vast may be their extent, yet in comparison of him are nothing".¹²

"Throughout this entire passage, there is not only the idea of majesty and power in God, but there is also the idea that he has fitted

10. Shorter Catechism.

11. Del.

12. Calvin.

or adjusted every thing by his wisdom and power, and adopted it to the conditions and wants of his creatures". 13

13. "Who hath directed the Spirit of Jehovah, or being his counsellor hath taught him?"

As the preceding verse emphasizes the power of God, this one and the following emphasize the wisdom of God. "He is not dependent for counsel on men or angels. He is supreme, independent and infinite. None is qualified to instruct him; and all therefore, should confide in his wisdom and knowledge". 14

The apostle Paul was evidently much impressed with the truth expressed in this verse. Compare Romans 11:34 and I Corinthians 2:16.

14. "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?"

As in the preceding verse, the answer is, "No one". The apostle Paul in speaking of Christ said, "In whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden". (Colossians 2:3)

15. "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing".

Some of the nations look great and mighty to us, but in comparison to the greatness of God they are as a drop from a bucket, and dust of the balance, esteemed as a negligible quantity. Before him the isles "are as the fine dust that is lifted up". The Chaldee renders it, "Lo, the isles are like ashes which the wind drives away".

16. "And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, not the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering".

"All Lebanon's forests would not supply fuel enough to burn sacrifices worthy of the glory of God (Chapter 66:1; I Kings 8:27; Psalm 50:8-13) nor the beasts thereof which abounded in Lebanon, sufficient for a burnt offering" 15.

17. "All the nations are as nothing before him; they are accounted by him as less than nothing, and vanity".

Turning back to the thought of the nations in God's sight, what stronger language could be used to express the utter insignificance of all the nations, not one excepted, in the sight of God? The Psalmist in a great Messianic Psalm, 72:11 says, "Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him". Compare Daniel 4:35. All the nations of the world today, the great as well as the small, are in His sight as nothing, less than nothing, confusion.

13. Barnes

14. ibid

15 Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown

18. "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare him?"

The omnipotent God is incomparable, and how foolish the attempts to make representations of Him! The purpose of the plagues in Egypt was to show that there was none like unto God (Exodus 9:14). Moses and Miriam at the Red Sea deliverance sang, "Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods?" (Exodus 15:11). Paul re-echoed this truth in his speech to the Athenian philosophers, "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver or stone, graven by art and device of man". (Acts 17:29) This same truth needs to be sounded in stentorian tones in the midst of the wholesale idolatry of the present day!

19. "The image, a workman hath cast it, and the goldsmith overlayeth it with gold, and casteth for it silver chains."

Compare the sin of Aaron, Exodus 32:2-4, and the words of Psalm 115:4-8, and Habakkuk 2:18, 19.

Over against the living, all-powerful, incomparable God, the idolator would place an impotent image, made and adorned by ordinary workmen.

20. "He that is too impoverished for such an oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a skilful workman to set up a graven image, that shall not be moved."

While the previous verse spoke of the precious metals used for making images, this verse refers to the wooden image commonly used by the poorer people. In Daniel's condemnation of Belshazzar he said "And thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified". (Daniel 5:23b)

21. "Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?"

The revelation of the one true and living God in His works renders man without excuse. (Romans 1:20) How much less excusable are those who have also had given them the revelation of God in His Word. "Isaiah has therefore joined both kinds of knowledge, in order to shew that the Jews ought to be double condemned, if they did not place confidence in God, after having received instruction concerning his power and goodness" 16

22. "It is he that sitteth above the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in;"

The greatness, the glory, and the government of God are here suggested. Note the minuteness of man in His presence,--as grasshoppers; and the ease with which He controls the heavens.

23. "that bringeth princes to nothing; that maketh the judges of the earth as vanity."

"Not only nature but man, not only individuals but nations, not only nations but their rulers, are completely subject to the power of God".¹⁷

"The particular idea here, as appears from the next verse, is, that the princes and rulers who are opposed to God constitute no real resistance to the execution of his purposes. He can strip off their honours and glory, and obliterate even their names".¹⁸

"Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth."
(Revelation 19:6b)

24. "Yea, they have not been planted; yea, they have not been sown; yea, their stock hath not taken root in the earth; moreover he bloweth upon them, and they wither, and the whirlwind taketh them away as stubble".

Princes and judges who oppose God are but transitory. Compare the fate of the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat (I Kings 14:9-11; 15:29,30). This verse suggests the sudden and complete destruction of such rulers, and the ease with which Jehovah brings them to nothing or confusion.

25. "To whom then will ye liken me, that I should be equal to him? saith the Holy One."

This is as a refrain, resuming the thought and largely the language of verse 18.

26. "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking."

The prophet asks the people to look to the heavens and the heavenly bodies for another proof of the greatness of Jehovah. It is He who has created all the luminaries; who commands them, leading them out like a general his army on the battlefield, and he calls each by name. "The call issued to the stars about to rise is the call of the All-Powerful and Almighty One, on which account not one fails in the countless host".¹⁹

27. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from Jehovah, and the justice due to me is passed away from my God?"

17. Alexander.

18. Barnes.

19. Del.

The prophet calls the Jews to task for complaining that Jehovah had forgotten or forsaken them.

"This verse is designed to reprove the people for their want of confidence in God. The idea is, 'If God is so great; if he arranges the hosts of heaven with such unerring skill, causing all the stars to observe their proper place and their exact times, the interests of his people are safe in his hands'." 20

28. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding".

"Those who are so despondent should know, if not from their own experience, yet from information handed down, that Jehovah, who created the whole earth from one end to the other, so that even Babylon is not outside His range of vision and power, is an eternal God, that is, eternally the same and never changing, who possesses and exercises today the power displayed at creation". 21 *theology*

What a compendium of *theology* in this verse! Note the significance of the Divine names, and the emphasis upon his eternity, omnipotence and omniscience.

29. "He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength."

He who faints not, neither is weary gives of his strength to the weak and weary. To the one who, like the apostle Paul, is conscious of his weakness and trusts in Him as the Source of strength, there is given power and increased strength. "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me". (Philippians 4:13) "And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect in weakness." (See II Corinthians 12:9,10)

30. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall".

^{In} The contrast to the supernatural, exhaustless strength of God as described in verse 28, there is here stated that natural strength at its best will fail. Even the strongest of young men selected for military service, falling shall fall.

31. "But they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint".

This golden text brings out clearly that faith is a condition for renewed spiritual strength, and that "elevation, energy, and endurance" are a consequence. Included in the idea of waiting for Jehovah are faith and confidence in Him, and patiently trusting in Him. Compare Luke 2:25, 38.

20. Barnes.

21. Del.

The reference to the eagle-wings "is derived from the fact that the eagle rises on the most vigorous wing of any bird, and ascends apparently farther towards the sun".²²

"In the last clause the verbs are introduced together for the third time in a beautiful antithesis. In verse 28, they are applied to Jehovah, in verse 30, to the strongest and most vigorous of men, as they are in themselves, and here to the waiters for Jehovah, the believers in his promises, who glory in infirmity that his strength may be perfect in their weakness (II Corinthians 12:9)." ²³

22. Barnes.

23. Alexander.

The God of Power and Foreknowledge versus Idols
Chapter 41

and Challenger,

In this chapter Jehovah appears as Summoner, verses 1-7; Comforter, ~~verses 8-22~~ verses 21-29. "He challenges the nations to a public trial, in order that, not by an appeal to contemporary history, as some suppose, but by predicting a definite epoch-making event, which shall take place in the future, he may demonstrate Jehovah's sole ~~duty~~ ^{deity}, and therefore, his incomparable superiority to dumb idols".¹ "His power and omniscience are contrasted with the impotence of idols, and illustrated by an individual example".²

"The argument of the whole is, that the idol gods were unable to defend the nations which trusted in them; that God would raise up a mighty prince who should be able to deliver the Jews from their long and painful calamity, and that they, therefore, should put their trust in Jehovah".³

According to Matthew Henry, "The chapter may be summed up in those words of Elijah, 'If Jehovah be God, then follow him; but, if Baal, be God, then follow him', and in the peoples' acknowledgment, upon the issue of the trial, 'Jehovah, he is the God, Jehovah, he is the God'."

1. "Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the peoples renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak; let us come near together to judgment".

God summons the whole heathen world, the worshippers of idols, to appear reverently before Him for a controversy. Let them strengthen themselves, if they can, in preparation for the argument, whereas "they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength" (40:31). They are summoned before the bar of God to reason together. Compare Isaiah 1:18.

2. "Who hath raised up one from the east, whom he called in righteousness to his foot? he giveth nations before him, and maketh him rule over kings; he giveth them as the dust to his sword, as the driven stubble to his bow".

It is to be shown in this chapter that Jehovah is God of the nations from the beginning to the end, and Israel his chosen servant. As a proof, He has raised up a conqueror and deliverer. "He is not however, already appearing on the horizon of history, as is sometimes fancied, but rather predicted as sure to come. The verb tenses which express completed action are perfects of certainty, and are used in precisely the same manner as those in 3:8; 5:13; 21:9".⁴ Some writers, including John Calvin, think "the one raised up from the east" refers to Abraham, whom God called out of Ur of the Chaldees and later from Haran, and caused to be a conqueror in the land of Canaan. (See Genesis 11:31; 12:1-3; Hebrews 7:1; 11:8-10). The more common interpretation considers the reference to Cyrus. (See verse 25: Chapters 44:28; 45:1-4; 13; 46:11)

-
1. G. L. Robinson.
 2. Alexander.
 3. Barnes.
 4. G. L. Robinson.

"Jehovah stirred up the great hero from the east, and also, according to verse 25, from the north. Both are correct, for Cyrus was a Persian..and yet, according to all ancient accounts closely connected with the royal house of Media..Media lay north and Persia east of Babylon".⁵

A significant alternate reading in the Revised Version margin of the second clause is as follows, "whom righteousness meeteth whithersoever he goeth". "Here and else where righteousness means the righteousness of God as manifested in his providence, his dealings with his people and their enemies. (See Chapter 1:27) To call to one's foot is a Hebrew idiom for calling to one's service, or summoning to take a place among one's followers. This act is here ascribed to the divine righteousness as a personified attribute".⁶ Compare the second part of this verse with II Chronicles 36:23, and Ezra 1:2.

3. "He pursueth them, and passeth on safely, even by a way that he had not gone with his feet".

Campbell Morgan points out the importance of distinguishing the singular pronouns in this connection, each in this verse referring to Cyrus; in the preceding verse sometimes to Jehovah and sometimes to his instrument.

4. "Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I, Jehovah, the first, and with the last, I am he."

The sovereign, eternal, unchangeable God not only raises up one from the east, and uses him as his agent to destroy nations and to deliver Israel, but He Jehovah (Isaiah 43:10; Revelation 1:8) is the one who from the beginning has called, commanded, and controlled the generations of men, and will continue to do so always, even unto the end of the world. See Isaiah 46:10; Psalm 90:2, 3; Revelation 19:6.

5. "The isles have seen, and fear; the ends of the earth tremble; they draw near, and come."

The effect of the campaigns and conquests of Cyrus was to bring fear and terror upon the nations, and to bring them together for mutual defence. Compare Psalm 67:7.

6. "They help everyone his neighbor; and everyone saith to his brother, Be of good courage."

The idolators get together for mutual support and encouragement. Compare I Samuel 4:7-9; Daniel 3:1-7; Acts 19:24-28.

7. "So the carpenter encourageth the goldsmith, and he that smootheneth with the hammer him that smiteth the anvil, saying of the soldering, It is good; and he fasteneth it with nails, that it should not be moved."

5. Del.

6. Alexander.

Manufacturers and repairers of idols encourage each other in their rebellion and opposition to God.

"This is a beautiful description of the anxiety, and pains, and consternation of sinners when calamity is coming upon them, and of the nature of their reliances. What could these dumb idols, these masses of brass, or silver, or stone do to protect them?"⁷

8. "But, thou, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend".

Following Jehovah's address to the nations foretelling their destruction there comes his address to Israel assuring them of His help and comfort, verses 8-20. Verses 8 and 9 give a most significant description of Israel. Here for the first time Israel is called Jehovah's "servant", and it is emphasized that Israel is his chosen servant.

"Israel is Jehovah's servant in virtue of a divine act, an act of pure grace, which, as is intimated in 'I have chosen thee, and not despised thee', has not its ground in Israel's excellences or merits; on the contrary, Israel was so insignificant that Jehovah might have despised it. But he anticipated in free, unmerited love, and imprinted on it the character of a servant of Jehovah. It has now to act as such, partly in reverential worship, partly in active obedience. ... When Jehovah received Abraham as His servant, and called him 'my servant', Genesis 26:24, Israel received the nature and name of a servant of Jehovah".⁸

Not only did Jehovah call Abraham "my servant" but also "my friend". (Compare II Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23) He also calls the children of Abraham by faith, the true Israel of God, "friends". John 15:15.

9. "Thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth, and called from the corners thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away."

This verse continues the description of the people of God begun in the previous verse. Israel, the chosen servant, the seed of Abraham, has been separated from the rest of men, but not separated from God. "But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ." The true Christian is held in the grip of Christ's love (II Corinthians 5:14) from which nothing can separate him. (Romans 8:38, 39)

10. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Note 1st The people addressed. See description of Israel in verses 8 and 9. 2nd The purpose of the admonition, - to comfort and console God's oppressed and distressed people. Compare verses 13 and 14 and John 14:1. 3rd The presence and power assured, the presence of the one true and living God (Psalm 46:1; Matthew 28:20; John 14:16-18) and His promised power, all-sufficient. Deuteronomy 33:27-29; II Corinthians 12:9; Philippians 4:13.

7. Barnes.

8. Del.

11. "Behold, all they that are incensed against thee shall be put to shame and confounded: they that strive with thee shall be as nothing, and shall perish".

Here is a promise that Israel's adversaries will be overthrown. The right hand of God's righteousness has not only its "bright side" for upholding Israel, but also its "fiery side" for the confusion and defeat of Israel's enemies. "For that nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; Yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted", Isaiah 60:12. See also Psalm 9:17.

12. "Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contend with thee; they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught."

This verse emphasizes that the foes of Israel will completely disappear or be utterly destroyed. This and the foregoing verse give a vivid description of the enemies of Israel and of their doom.

13. "For I, Jehovah thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."

Jehovah will support, guide, encourage, comfort, His people. This repeated assurance of divine help is here presented under the figure of Jehovah holding Israel's hand and speaking comfortable words. Compare with verse 10. Compare also the experience of Paul, II Timothy 4:17.

14. "Fear not, thou worm of Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith Jehovah, and thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel".

Note (1) the repeated admonition, (2) the terms for the people addressed, (3) the repeated assurance, and (4) the Divine names. "The same encouragement is here repeated, but with a direct contrast between Israel's weakness and the strength of God. The epithet worm expresses the real meanness and unworthiness of man, as in Job 25:6. The word translated Redeemer would suggest to a Hebrew reader the ideas of a near kinsman (Leviticus 25:24, 25) and of deliverance from bondage by the payment of a ransom"⁹. See Job 19:25, Galatians 3:13; Titus 2:14.

15. "Behold, I have made thee to be a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff."

Israel, through the strength of Jehovah, will become as a threshing instrument for threshing and crushing the mountains and hills. "Mountains and hills" are evidently a figure for formidable enemies. Compare Zechariah 4:7 and II Corinthians 10:4,5;

16. "Thou shalt winnow them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; and thou shalt rejoice in Jehovah, thou shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel".

The figure of the previous verse in continued and completed, picturing the scattering and disappearance of Israel's foes.

With victory over the enemies shall come joy and glorying in the Lord. "In a word, the Prophet exhorts to gratitude, that, the more highly God exalts us, the more carefully ought we to repress all the vanity of ambition, and rejoice and glory in him alone".¹⁰

17. "The poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst; I, Jehovah, will answer them, I the Lord of Israel, will not forsake them".

A need is here realized, and a supply to this need is promised. Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the Help of the helpless, Isaiah 44:3. Jesus came to preach good tidings to the poor (Isaiah 61:1). Compare Psalm 72:12,13. He offers the water of life to the thirsty. John 4:10-15; 7:37-39; Revelation 22:17. Jehovah will answer their cry, (Isaiah 65:24; Psalm 50:15) and not forsake them. (Isaiah 42:16; Hebrews 13:5, 6)

18. "I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

A further promise of provision for His people is here given under the figure of water, Compare Isaiah 35:6, 7; 44:3; Ezekiel 47:1-8; John 7:37-39 (the gospel of the coming of the Holy Spirit).

19. "I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, the pine, and the box-tree together:"

This verse depicts "a wealth of noble, fragrant, shady trees, so that the desert, where foot and eye found no resting-place, is changed, as by a magician's wand, into a vast, well-watered, dense grove, and shines in sevenfold glory".¹¹ Compare Isaiah 32:15.

20. "That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of Jehovah hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."

Note the climactic force of this paragraph. 1. Realization of need, verse 17; 2. Response assured, verse 17; 3. Refreshment pictured, verse 18; 4. Resting-place promised, verse 19; 5. Realization of the supernatural power of God, verse 20. Compare Ephesians 2:6-10.

21. "Produce your cause, saith Jehovah; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob."

10. John Calvin.

11. Del.

The challenge stiffens as Jehovah again, as in verses 1-7, addresses the worshippers of idols, or more exactly the idols themselves. "In the former part of the chapter God had urged his claims to confidence from the fact that he had raised up Cyrus; that the idols were weak and feeble compared with him; and from the fact that it was his fixed purpose to defend his people, and to meet and refresh them when faint and weary. In the verses which follow the 21st, he urges his claims to confidence from the fact that he alone was able to predict future events, and calls on the worshippers of idols to show their claims in the same manner".¹²

22. "Let them bring them forth and declare ye the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or show us things to come".

There are different views as to the meaning of this verse. One interpretation is "show what former predictions the idols have given, (probably to be preferred) that we may compare the event ('latter end') with them; or give new prophecies ('declare things to come')".¹³ Another view is, "Let them foretell the entire series of events: let them predict, in their order, the things which shall first occur as well as those which shall finally happen...If they cannot predict the order of things, or a series of events, let them clearly foretell any single event in futurity."¹⁴

23. "Declare the things that are to come hereafter that we may know that ye are gods: Yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together."

This is a clear challenge to the idols to predict future events as a test of their claim to divinity. Compare John 13:19. They are challenged to do something to show their power, whether it be to do good to their devotees, or to inflict punishments or bring adversity upon their enemies.

24. "Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work is of nought; an abomination is he that chooseth you".

The idols fail to respond to Jehovah's challenge. They fail the test of deity. They and their work are nothing, and their worshippers an abomination unto the Lord. Compare Psalm 115:4,8; and I Corinthians 8:4-6.

25. "I have raised up one from the north and he is come; from the rising of the sun one that calleth upon my name: and he shall come upon rulers as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth the clay."

"Jehovah here, by the mouth of the prophet, predicts the victories of Cyrus over the Chaldeans and their allies, at least 150 years before the event, as one instance of his foreknowledge and invincible power.

12. Barnes.

13. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown.

14. Barnes.

Media lay north of Babylon, and Persia eastward; and Cyrus commanded the forces of both these nations; and, by his wonderful success, he trampled down mighty monarchs as mortar, and as the potter treads the clay".¹⁵ Compare Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-6, 13; 46:10,11; Ezra 1:2,3; and notes on 41:2.

26. "Who hath declared it from beginning, that we may know? and before time, that we may say, He is right? Yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that showeth, yea, there is none that heareth your words".

The challenge to the idols to predict these future events remains unanswered. They are absolutely impotent. Only Jehovah, he is God, the sole deity, with power to predict future events. Isaiah 45:21. Habakkuk 2:18-20.

27. "I am the first that saith unto Zion, Behold, behold them; and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings".

"The sense is, 'I, Jehovah, first gave to Zion the announcement of these things, I predicted the restoration of the Jews to their own land, and the raising up of the man who should deliver them; and I only have uttered the prophecies respecting the time and circumstances in which these events would occur'".¹⁶ Compare Isaiah 48:3-8; 40:9; 44:28; 52:7; Luke 2:10,11.

28. "And when I look, there is no man; even among them there is no counsellor, that, when I ask of them, can answer a word".

Among all the idols and idolators there is no one with the power to predict future events. Only Jehovah can predict future events, therefore He alone is God.

29. "Behold, all of them, their works are vanity and nought; their molten images are wind and confusion".

The final verdict in the case is an unquestionable, condemnation of idols and idol-worshippers. They are absolutely powerless to produce prophets and ⁸⁸²seers. "Therefore, dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." I Corinthians 10:14. "My little children, guard yourselves from idols", I John 5:21.

15. The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, Page 452.

16. Barnes.

*Then out of this
spiritual Israel*

The Servant of Jehovah - Individual and National
Isaiah 42.

In some of the servant passages in Isaiah such as 41:8; 42:18, the reference is to the nation; in some such as found in Chapter 43, the meaning is the godly portion in the nation; and in some the individual Messiah is clearly meant. Among the most prominent passages which refer to the future individual are 42:1f; 48:16; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12. The familiar pyramid illustration of Delitzsch helps to an understanding of our view of the servant of Jehovah. The base of the pyramid is national Israel, called and chosen of God to be His servant to the nations, and idea repeatedly emphasized in the Old Testament. Yet, as expressed by Paul in Romans, "They are not all Israel that are of Israel". Therefore, upon the base of the pyramid there is the section known as spiritual Israel. There comes the ideal Israelite, so that the apex of the pyramid represents the true Messiah, who alone in his person and work fulfils the requirements of the suffering servant of Jehovah.

For a brief yet most lucid presentation of what we believe to be the scriptural meaning of the servant passages we refer to the little volume, "The Christ of the Old Testament" (Edward Mack), where our teacher leads us among the lofty heights of the servant passages, and then tarries at the sunlit summit, as he points out some of the sublime and glorious truths of Chapter 53. By taking the servant passages in the regular, historic order, there is clearly shown the progressive, climactic development of the servant idea. In the first passage in Chapter 41 the servant is Israel, the nation. In Chapter 42:1-9 it is equally clear that the servant is an individual Person. In the latter part of this Chapter 42:18f the national servant again appears. God had given the national servant a great law which it had not kept. Hence the servant as a nation was blind, deaf, and in ruin. Yet Israel must not be totally cast off, so in Chapter 43 the godly portion (Spiritual Israel) is brought into view. Then Chapter 44, "The Baptism Chapter", continues with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Servant and the blotting out of Israel's transgressions. Following this, Cyrus and Babylon are brought into view showing us the near historic goal. Chapter 48, like Paul in Romans, shows us the casting off of the national servant, as utterly unfit to be Jehovah's Messianic Servant. In Chapter 48:16 the Servant appears for the first time in the first person. His message is taken up in Chapter 49 where he is set forth as the true Israel, the seed of Abraham, which is One. "Never again in his Servant Chapters, after this rise to a Spiritual conception of the Servant, will Isaiah ever return to the purely national phase." ¹ See introduction to Chapter 53.

The substance of Chapter 42 may be suggested as follows: 1. The speaker, the individual Servant and His service (verses 1-9). 2. Summons to praise Jehovah (verses 10-13). 3. The Glory of Jehovah to be revealed in His judgment and grace (verses 14-17). 4. The Guilt of the national servant of Jehovah reprov'd. (verses 18-25)

42:1 "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles."

Behold Jehovah's Servant, Jesus. Matthew 12:17-21 confirms this interpretation that "servant" here means the individual, the Messiah, who took the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7). He is the One whom Jehovah sustains or supports; set apart, selected, chosen for a definite purpose; in whom the soul of Jehovah delights (Matthew 3:17; 17:5) upon whom has been put the Spirit of Jehovah (Isaiah 11:2; 61:1; Matthew 3:16; Luke 4:18, 19, 21); the One whose mission is both spiritual and missionary - to establish the true religion in the earth. Behold, the man! John 19:5.

2. "He will not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street."

"The simple meaning of the verse is, he shall not be noisy but quiet".² Jesus was unostentatious and unobtrusive in his manner.

3. "A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench: he will bring forth justice in truth".

"As verse two described His unturbulent spirit towards His violent enemies (Matthew 12:14-16), and His utter freedom from love of notoriety, so verse three His tenderness in cherishing the first spark of grace in the penitent (Chapter 49; 11)."³ Compare Luke 22:31, 32; John 20:27; Hebrews 2:17, 18.

Regarding the last clause, Campbell Morgan suggests that Matthew 12:20 so interprets Isaiah in order to emphasize judgment along with grace in the Messiah's method.

Commenting on this verse John Calvin says, "We ought therefore to guard diligently against extremes; that is, we must neither crush the minds of the weak by excessive severity, nor encourage by our smooth language anything that is evil".

4. "He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law."

His will be a triumphant ministry. His zeal will not decline (9:7). His high spiritual mission will be accomplished of establishing the true religion in the earth. The distant nations shall desire or depend upon his revelation of the truth. "And in his name shall the Gentiles hope" (Matthew 12:21). See Psalm 22:27; Psalm 72:8-11.

5. "Thus saith God Jehovah, he that created the heavens, and stretched them forth; he that spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein;"

Here Jehovah is described as the Creator, Preserver, and Lord of all (Compare Psalm 24:1,2); emphasizing the power of Him who has called his Servant Jesus, has equipped Him with His Spirit, who upholds Him and delights in Him.

2. Alexander.

3. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown.

6. "I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles".

In verses 1-4 Jehovah speaks about the Messiah, here he speaks directly to Him. Jehovah called the Messiah "in righteousness", which Lowth renders "for a righteous purpose". "He called Him in strict adherence to His loving will, which would have grace to take the place of justice, but will display justice of double severity against those who scornfully reject the offered grace".⁴ See Romans 3:25, 26.

The chosen Servant will be sustained and kept and given for a covenant (Hebrews 13:20) "for a mediator, or guarantee, of the covenant of grace, which is all summed up in him",⁵ and a light (John 8:12).

Many writers interpret "people" as referring to the Jews, (see Jeremiah 31:31-33); others as referring to men in general both Jews and Gentiles. Compare Luke 2:32 and Acts 13:47.

7. "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."

This verse tells us something of the condition of men in general, they are in spiritual blindness and spiritual bondage. It tells us more particularly of the purpose of the coming of the Mediator and Savior, namely to bring spiritual light and spiritual liberty to those blinded and bound by sin. Compare Luke 4:18-21; Luke 24:45; Hebrews 2:14, 15.

8. "I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images."

"The name Jehovah is here used with emphasis, in reference to its etymological import, as descriptive of a self-existent, independent, and eternal being--The general doctrine of the verse is, that true and false religion cannot coexist; because, however tolerant idolatry may be, it is essential to the worship of Jehovah to be perfectly exclusive of all other gods. This is included in the very name Jehovah, and accounts for its solemn proclamation here".⁶ See Exodus 3:13-15 and 20:1-6)

9. "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."

"This is an appeal to former prophecies already verified, as grounds of confidence in those yet unfulfilled"⁷. See Joshua 21:45 for illustration of former things which came to pass, and I Peter 1:10-12, 19-21 for revelation of new things prophesied in the Old Testament.

10. "Sing unto Jehovah a new song, and his praise from the end

4. Del.

5. Matthew Henry.

6. Alexander.

7. ibid.

of the earth; ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein, the isles, and the inhabitants thereof".

The "new things" prophesied by Jehovah call for the singing of a "new song" of praise to Jehovah, a song to be sung the world over. Compare Isaiah 24:14-16a; Romans 15:9-11. "The subject of this song is, that Christ has been revealed to the world, and sent by the Father, in order to relieve the miseries of his Church, and to restore her to perfect order, and indeed, as it were, to renew the whole world".⁸ Compare the new song of Revelation 5:9,10.

11. "Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit; let the inhabitants of Sela sing; let them shout from the top of the mountains."

The whole world is called upon to take up the new song of praise to Jehovah. Kedar was the name of the second son of Ismael, Genesis 25:13. His descendants lived in Arabia. Sela was a rock city of the Edomites (16:1). Here is an intimation that the gospel offer has in view all peoples, even the Ishmaelites. Compare Genesis 21:17.

12. "Let them give glory unto Jehovah, and declare his praise in the islands".

All classes, all races, and all places are to give glory and praise to Jehovah - even in the most distant regions of the earth the sounding joy is to be repeated. Isaiah 24:14-16a, Psalm 22:27-31; Psalm 117. The whole world will "take up the song which now the angels sing."

13. "Jehovah will go forth as a mighty man; he will stir up his zeal like a man of war: he will cry, yea, he will shout aloud; he will do mightily against his enemies".

This verse points to Jehovah's triumph over his enemies. He is pictured as a hero with the shout of a warrior. Psalm 24:8; Isaiah 59:16-19. His victory over his foes calls for thanksgiving and praise to Him. See the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, Revelation 15:3,4, and the Hallelujah of Revelation 19:1,2.

14. "I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry out like a travelling woman; I will gasp and pant together."

The wrath of Jehovah, long held back, will be ^{loosed} released, and will pour forth for the destruction of His enemies. Nahum 1:2; Romans 1:18.

15. "I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and will dry up the pools."

8. John Calvin.

These catastrophic changes which Jehovah declared He would cause in the face of nature suggest to us the desolation and destruction He would bring upon his foes. Compare Psalm 107:33,34.

16. "And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; in paths that they know not will I lead them; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things will I do, and I will not forsake them."

"The blind are they whom transgression and wickedness have robbed of power of spiritual sight...The grace of Jehovah helps the blind, scatters the darkness, removes all hindrances and obstacles".⁹ Note how the truth of this verse is illustrated in the conversion of Saul, his call, and his subsequent career, Acts 9:1-22; II Timothy 4:17,18.

17. "They shall be turned back, they shall be utterly put to shame, that trust in graven images, that say unto molten images, ye are our gods".

While the revelation of the glory of Jehovah means deliverance to His people who put their trust in Him, it means disappointment and disgrace to idolators. Compare Exodus 32:4, 8. "Jehovah's glorious deeds of judgment and deliverance unmask the mock gods to the deep confusion of their worshippers".¹⁰

18. "Hear ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see."

"Here he gives the name of blind to those who shut their eyes in the midst of light, and do not behold the works of God; and the name of deaf to those who refuse to hear him, and sink down into stupidity and slothfulness amidst the dregs of their ignorance".¹¹ With this verse compare the cure of the deaf-mute, Mark 7:31-37, and the cure of the two blind men, Matthew 9:27-31. "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, Jehovah hath made even both of them", Proverbs 20:12. "According to your faith be it done unto you", Matthew 9:29b.

19. "Who is blind but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? who is blind as he that is at peace with me, and blind as Jehovah's servant".

Here "servant" evidently refers to the nation Israel, the same as in 41:8,9, in contrast to the individual Servant, the Messiah, in 42:1. Israel, called to be Jehovah's servant and messenger among the nations, befriended and trusted by Jehovah, has in conduct been unfaithful. Compare Isaiah 6:9; II Corinthians 3:14,15; 4:4.

20. "Thou seest many things, but thou observest not; his ears are open, but he heareth not".

9. Del.

10. ibid.

11. Calvin

Shutting the eyes when light is given, and closing the ears when the true word is taught make the condemnation all the greater. Sin against light, not only condemned here, but repeatedly in Scripture. See Matthew 13:14,15; Acts 28:22-27; James 4:17.

21. "It pleased Jehovah, for his righteousness' sake to magnify the law, and make it honorable".

"Jehovah was pleased for His righteousness' sake, which is here regarded as a dispensing of grace according to purpose, to make great and glorious the "Torah", the instruction, teaching, revelation which He gave His people...But how glaring the contradiction in which Israel's present condition stands to these gracious acts and purposes of its God!"¹²

"The whole effect of the Redeemer's work is to do honour to the law of God, nor has anything occurred in the history of our world that has done so much to maintain its authority and binding obligation as his death on the cross in the place of sinners".¹³ Romans 3:25, 26; II Corinthians 5:21.

22. "But this is a people robbed and plundered; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses; they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore."

What a vivid picture this is of the penalty for unfaithfulness to Jehovah, a picture of misery, captivity, helplessness! "This had its full accomplishment in the final destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, which God brought upon them for rejecting the gospel of Christ".¹⁴

23. "Who is there among you that will give ear to this? that will hearken and hear ^{for} from the time to come?"

In view of the word of Jehovah to Israel in their sinful and miserable condition, comes this call to repentance. "Repent ye therefore and turn again". See Acts 3:19-21.

24. "Who gave Jacob for a spoil and Israel to the robbers? did not Jehovah? he against whom we have sinned, and in whose ways they would not walk, neither were they obedient unto his law."

The prophet here (1) emphasizes that Jehovah is the author of these judgments upon Israel ^{on} an account of their sins, (2) he acknowledges that Israel (including himself) has sinned against Jehovah, (3) and he characterizes their sin. "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God".¹⁵

25. "Therefore he poured upon him the fierceness of his anger, and the strength of battle; and it set him on fire round about, yet he laid it not to heart."

yet he knew not; and it burned him

12. Del.

13. Barnes.

14. Matthew Henry.

15. Shorter Catechism.

"This continues and concludes the description of God's judgments and of Israel's insensibility. "He knew not" does not mean unawares, with his knowledge, but, as the parallel clause shows, implies extreme insensibility". ¹⁶

Compare Malachi 2:2.

The God of Redeeming Love-Chapter 43.

At the close of Chapter 42 the thought was on the subject of punishment. At the beginning of Chapter 43 there is the change to promise. In the midst of wrath mercy is remembered. In this chapter there is brought more into view the remnant according to the election of grace, the godly portion of Israel, saved by grace. "But where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly". See Romans 5:20b-21. In Chapter 43 we note particularly, 1. Love, the motive for the redemption and protection of Israel (verses 1-7), 2. Omnipotence and omniscience, the proof of the sole deity of the Redeemer, (verses 8-13), 3. The sovereign power of the Redeemer illustrated by reference to history and prophecy (verses 14-21), 4. The sovereign grace of the Redeemer abounding for the redemption of sinning Israel (verses 22-28).

43:1 "But now thus saith Jehovah that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine."

(1) Jehovah created Israel. "For we are his workmanship; created in Christ for good works". See Ephesians 2:10. (2) Jehovah formed Israel. "Thou art the potter, I am the clay". (3) Jehovah has ~~redeemed~~^{redeemed} Israel. "The Hebrew word 'gaal' means to ransom by a price paid in lieu of the captive, compare verse 3"¹ He redeemed Israel from Egypt, and will redeem from Babylon. "Who gave himself that he might redeem us". See Titus 2:14; Revelation 5:9. (4) He named Israel, suggesting a very close relationship. (5) He possesses Israel. "Ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body". (I Corinthians 6:19b-20)

2. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overthrow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

His presence is assured in the midst of difficulty and danger. He delivered Israel at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:29, Hebrews 11:29) and at the Jordan (Joshua 3:15-17). Compare Psalm 23:4; 46:4-7; 91:15; II Corinthians 12:9,10; II Timothy 4:17,18. He delivered the Hebrew children from the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:25, 27). Compare I Peter 4:12, 13.

The Christian is not exempt from sufferings but is assured of God's presence and protection in the midst of them. "We have, indeed, the same feeling of pain as other men, but we are supported by the grace of God, and fortified by the spirit of patience, that we may not faint; and at length he will stretch out his hand and lift us up on high".²

1. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown.
2. Calvin.

3. "For I am Jehovah thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior; I have given Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in thy stead."

Note here the richness of the divine names. "Holy One of Israel" found so frequently in both parts of the book of Isaiah is a strong proof of the unity of the book. "Savior" is a favorite name used by Isaiah frequently.

Of the second part of this verse Lowth says, "Perhaps it may mean, generally, that God had often saved his people at the expense of other nations, whom he had as it were in their stead, given up to destruction". "The word ransom, λύτρον, is properly covering, then a gift-covering (guarding) from an evil afflicting or threatening one, especially the expiation, or ransom - money paid to release from guilt contracted, λύτρον" ³ See Matthew 20:28.

4. "Since thou hast been precious in my sight, and honorable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men in thy stead, and peoples instead of thy life."

"The first clause, as the whole context clearly shows, does not refer to intrinsic qualities, but to an arbitrary sovereign choice. 'Since I began to treat thee as a thing of value, thou hast been distinguished among the nations'. The verse, so far from ascribing any merit to the people refers all to God." ⁴ Jeremiah 31:3; John 17:23,26. Redeeming love is the motive for the redemption and protection of Israel. II Chronicles 16:9. The thought of the second part of this verse is similar to that of the second part of verse 3.

5. "Fear not; for I am with thee; I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;"

Here is "a promise to the church that she should be completed, that all her scattered members should be ultimately brought together". ⁵ Compare Deuteronomy 30:3,4; Isaiah 49:12; John 10:16.

6. "I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth,"

In a poetic way the promise of the foregoing verse is here emphasized - a glorious missionary promise that God will call out his own from all parts of the world. See Psalm 22:27; Hosea 1:10,11.

7. "Every one that is called by ^{my} name, and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, yea, whom I have made."

This verse tells us who the redeemed are from all over the world, suggests how they have been redeemed, and emphasizes why they have been redeemed. They are the children of God, (See John 1:12,13; I John 3:1,2) saved by grace, and for His glory. In the last part of this verse "the three synonyms emphasize the power, freeness, and

3. Del.

4. Alexander.

5. ibid.

wealth of the grace with which Jehovah called Israel into existence, in order to glorify Himself in it and to be glorified by it"⁶.
Ephesians 1:6,12; 2-4-7; John 15:8.

8. "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears."

Some consider this challenge as addressed to blinded, rebellious Israel. Isaiah 42:18-20; Ezekiel 12:2. Probably a more correct interpretation is that it is addressed to the Gentile world. See Psalm 115:8; Romans 1:20,21.

9. "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the peoples be assembled; who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, It is truth."

The common explanation is that the heathen are here summoned before the judgment bar of God, and challenged to give specific instances among themselves or their idols of foreknowledge and prediction - a challenge similar to that of Chapter 41:21-26. See also I Kings 18:21-24, 36-39

Alexander suggests this possible explanation, that the gathering of the nations (first clause) may denote their accession to the church, as predicted in verses 5-7, and "this" in the next clause may refer to the same event. The idea then would be, "Who among them (that is, the nations) could have foretold their own change of condition"?

10. "Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me."

"After having summoned the Gentiles to a contest, and after having proved that the stories which they circulated concerning their idols were false and unfounded, God now separates himself from the multitude of them, and produces his witnesses, that he may not be thought to be of the same class with them".⁷ Jehovah's witnesses are the godly portion of Israel. They are the remnant, spiritual Israel, here called 'servant'. They are to testify that Jehovah is "absolutely and exclusively God." Compare John 20:31; Acts 1:8.

11. "I, even I am Jehovah; and besides me there is no saviour".

Jehovah, the sole deity is also the sole Savior. "And in none other is there salvation". See Acts 4:12 and Jude 25. "The exclusive honour here claimed is not merely that of infallible foreknowledge, but of infinite power. Jehovah was able not only to foretell the salvation of his people, but to save them."⁸

12. "I have declared, and I have saved, and I have showed; and there was no strange god among you; therefore ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and I am God."

6. Del.
7. John Calvin.
8. Alexander.

Jehovah both foretells and gives salvation, all of this without the aid of a foreign God. "Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so". See Psalm 107:1-3.

13. "Yea, since the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who can hinder it?"

Jehovah is the eternal God, Psalm 90:2; Hebrews 13:8, and His power and purpose are irresistible, that is, they cannot be successfully resisted. Daniel 4:35.

14. "Thus saith Jehovah, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: For your sake, I have sent to Babylon, and I will bring down all of them as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships of their rejoicing."

Here is an illustration of the sovereign power of Jehovah to be exercised for the good of His people. (See II Chronicles 16:9). He will deliver them from Babylon. For this purpose He sent His instruments, the Medes and Persians under Cyrus, for the dissolution of the Chaldean Empire. See Isaiah 45:1-5.

'Ships of their rejoicing' may refer to the ships "which had hitherto been the object of their exultant pride and joy".⁹

15. "I am Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King."

The destruction of Babylon is a proof that Jehovah is sole deity, especially the God of Israel, who are His separated people, His workmanship, and the citizens of His kingdom. "The Church which calls on Him as the Holy One, the people which let Him rule as King over them, cannot long remain despised and enslaved".¹⁰

16. "Thus saith Jehovah, who maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters;"

Jehovah's deliverance of Israel from Egypt was probably in the mind of the prophet as these words were written. Jehovah opened up a way in the Red Sea, and a path in the Jordan. Exodus 14:21,22; Joshua 3:15,16.

17. "Who bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the mighty man (they lie down together, they shall not rise; they are extinct, they are quenched as a wick):"

Such sovereign power was exercised for the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea. See Exodus 15:19.

18. "Remember ye not the former things neither consider the things of old."

"The admonition of verse 18 does not refer to entire forgetfulness and non-attention (see, on the other hand, 46:9), but they are to look more forwards than backwards; the new thing, which Jehovah is working out, outshines the old, and is worthy of undivided, most

9. Del.

10. ibid.

eager observation!"¹¹ See Jeremiah 23:7,8.

19. "Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."

Passing from the thought of the former deliverance of Israel, the new deliverance is here emphasized. See Isaiah 42:9; 35:1,6-10. The immediate, supernatural power of God has been manifested in the past, and will be more gloriously revealed in the future.

"I will open a way, not merely in the Red Sea, but in the wilderness of the whole world; and not merely one river shall gush out of the rock, but many, which shall refresh, not the bodies as formerly, but the souls of the thirsty, so that the prophecy shall be fulfilled: 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation!'"¹²

20. "The beasts of the field shall honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; because I have waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen,"

In the future the sovereign power of Jehovah will be revealed particularly to make sufficient provisions for the needs of his chosen people, to give water to the thirsty ones. See John 4:14; 7:37-39; Revelation 22:17. "At the same time this miraculous act of grace will be for the good of the animal world; their rejoicing cries are unconscious praise to Jehovah".¹³ Psalm 148:10.

21. "The people which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise."

"This brings us back to the main proposition of the Chapter, namely, that Jehovah had not only made them what they were, but had made them for the purpose of promoting his own glory, so that any claim of merit upon their part, and any apprehension of entire destruction, must be equally unfounded".¹⁴

As the streams in the desert were made to give drink to God's chosen people, so Israel was formed that they might set forth the praise of Jehovah. See Luke 1:74,75; I Corinthians 6:20; I Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 1:12.

22. "Yet thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel."

Although Israel had been redeemed by Jehovah for a glorious purpose, yet they had stubbornly sinned. The first clause of this verse, as commonly interpreted, suggests unfaithfulness to Jehovah in prayer. The word "me" is emphatic in the original, "as if it were said: Israel may have applied itself to call on other gods, but not on Jehovah".¹⁵ Compare Isaiah 64:7; Hosea 7:14. Along with neglect to

11. Del.

12. Words of Jerome quoted by Fausset

13. Del.

14. Alexander.

15. Del.

pray was the fact that they were weary of Jehovah. Worship ceased and weariness characterized them.

In the following paraphrase Alexander suggests this interpretation of the verse: "It is not I that have been called by thee; for so far from manifesting such a preference, thou hast been wearied and disgusted with the labour which attends my service".

23. "Thou hast not brought me of thy sheep for burnt-offerings; neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices. I have not burdened thee with offerings, nor wearied thee with frankincense."

The first part of the verse has been interpreted as follows: "You have not so performed your ceremonial duties as to lay me under any obligation to protect you. You have not really given me your cattle, you have not truly honored me with sacrifices"¹⁶ Compare Isaiah 1:11-15; Proverbs 21:27. The second part of the verse is well explained by Matthew Henry: "I have not made it a task and drudgery to you, whatever you, through the corruption of your natures, have made it yourselves...None of God's commandments are grievous, no, not those concerning sacrifice and incense." See I John 5:3; Romans 8:15.

24. "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast burdened me with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." *holy*

"The nation, which Jehovah now redeems out of purest grace was not burdened with costly services of this kind (see Jeremiah 6:20); on the contrary, only Jehovah was the burdened and harassed one. The ⁷14¹⁷ (to make one a slave, lay on him a slave's work). He denies to Israel as a sufferer, and ascribes to Himself. Israel's sins lay on Him like a burden on a slave. His love took on itself the burden of Israel's guilt, His own body and righteous wrath aggravating its weight; but it was a heavy task to bear and remove this heavy burden"¹⁷ See Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 2:14,15.

25. "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins."

"This passage marks the highest point of grace in the Old Testament."¹⁸ In this climatic verse is stated clearly the sovereign, free, absolute, pardoning grace of the Redeemer alone - grace abounding for the redemption of sinning Israel, grace greater than all their sin.

"This is the conclusion to which all that goes before was meant to lead, to wit, that God's goodness to his people is gratuitous. If they, instead of choosing God and his service, were averse to both; if instead of pleasing him by their attentions, they had grieved him by their sins; it follows of course that he could still show them favor only by gratuitously blotting out their sins from his remembrance, or in other words, freely forgiving them".¹⁹ See Romans 5:20,21; Isaiah 44:22; 55:7; Acts 3:19.

16. Alexander.

17. Del

18. Dillman

19. Alexander.

26. "Put me in remembrance; let us plead together: set thou forth thy cause, that thou mayest be justified."

"Jehovah now calls on Israel, if this be not so, to remind Him of any merit on which it can rely....Justification is a forensic act (see 1:18). Righteousness accuses, grace acquits. Or, has Israel any merit that righteousness ought to pronounce it just? The object of 'call to remembrance' and 'recount' is Israel's supposed meritorious works."²⁰ See Luke 10:29; 18:9-14.

27. "Thy first father sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me."

Not only had Israel no merit of their own, but their fathers and leaders had also sinned.

"First father" is variously interpreted. Some consider it a reference to Adam (Romans 5:12); others to Abraham (Joshua 24:2; Genesis 15:8); others to Jacob (verse 28); others to Israel's forefathers collectively (Acts 7:51). "Teachers" literally mean "Interpreters". See Isaiah 5:12; Jeremiah 5:31.

28. "Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; and I will make Jacob a curse, and Israel a reviling."

Calamities and reproaches are inflicted upon them because of their sins. See Deuteronomy 28:37.

Jehovah - Pouring Out and Blotting Out
Chapter 44

Two great redemptive themes are particularly emphasized in this chapter, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (verses 1-5), and the blotting out of sins (verses 21-23). At the same time Jehovah is set forth as the sole deity - the source of the gifts which transform Israel (verses 6-8) in striking contrast to the gods of wood and stone. The folly of idolatry is vividly portrayed in verses 9-20, in which are described the makers, the manufacture, and the material of idols, and the mind of the idolator.

The concluding paragraph (verses 24-28) is both a summary of what has gone before - God in creation, in providence and in revelation, and an introduction to the section on Cyrus, Jehovah's agent for delivering Israel from captivity in Babylon.

44:1 "Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen:"

The pendulum quickly swings from the curse and reviling at the close of Chapter 43 to the blessing and refreshing through the outpouring of God's Spirit as promised in this chapter to His chosen servant Israel. Compare a similar change at the close of Chapter 42 and beginning of Chapter 43, and this call to hear with 42:23; 48:16-18, and 55:3.

2. "Thus saith Jehovah that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, who will help thee: Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen."

Jeshurun is a poetic name for Israel, probably meaning "my little upright one". Compare Deuteronomy 32:15; 33:5, 26.

Here are many descriptions of Jehovah and of His people found repeatedly in this section of Isaiah, also the repeated assurance of divine help, and repeated admonition, "Fear not". Compare 41:8-10, etc.

3. "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring;"

"This is the grand reason why God's people should not despair"¹. We have here the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with all His gifts for transforming Israel. Compare Isaiah 59:21; Ezekiel 34:26; John 7:37-39; Revelation 22:17; Isaiah 32:15; Joel 2:28; Zechariah 12:10; Acts 2:17, 33, 39.

Water is repeatedly used in Scripture as a figure of the Holy Spirit. See John 1:33; 3:5, etc.

This glorious promise is for him that is thirsty, and for his children (Acts 2:39).

4. "And they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the water courses."

1. Alexander.

A blessed assurance of the effect of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit - the offspring shall spring up, or the descendants of Israel shall experience the blessing of the Holy Spirit. See Acts 2:41-47; 4:4; 5:14.

"No better description can be given of a revival than that given here: The Spirit of God descending like streams and floods on the young; and their springing forth in the graces of piety as among the grass, and growing in the love of God and love to men like willows by the water courses. Who would not pray for such a work of grace? What family; what congregation; what people can be happy without it?²

5. "One shall say, I am Jehovah's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto Jehovah, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

A glorious climax to the blessed assurance as to the effect of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The revival is to extend to peoples of other nations, who shall give themselves unto Jehovah (II Corinthians 8:5), and consider it an honor to be numbered among His people. And these redeemed of the Lord shall say so, making a confession of their faith in Him. (Romans 10:10)

6. "Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God."

What a compendium of theology in one verse! The One who is speaking is the God of revelation and of grace, the King and Redeemer of His church. He has all power in heaven and on earth. He is the eternal and only God.

7. "And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I established the ancient people? and the things that are coming and that shall come to pass, let them declare."

God's power to predict future events, and to govern all things are a challenge to the heathen gods.

"Shalt there be found among the gods of the nations anyone that can call, that is raise up, announce, and appoint deliverers? Does not this plainly show that I am God? ..Before idols were framed by men, I determined that I should have a church, which should last forever."³

8. "Fear ye not, neither be afraid; have I not declared unto thee of old, and showed it? and ye are my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no Rock; I know not any."

Since Israel has such a God as is here portrayed, his people should not be afraid. He has proved his sole deity, and they are his witnesses. (43:10-12; Acts 1:8). He is the only God and sole ground of their trust, their refuge and foundation. (Isaiah 26:4)

9. "They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity;

2. Barnes.

3. John Calvin.

and the things that they delight in shall not profit; and their own witnesses see not, nor know; that they may be put to shame."

In striking contrast to the supremacy of God is the impotence of idols. Here the makers of idols are described. They are all of them confusion; the objects of their delight are worthless; their witnesses, in contrast to Jehovah's witnesses upon whom the Spirit has come, verses 3 and 8, are blind and ignorant; and the consequence is shame. See Daniel 5:23; Psalm 135:18; II Corinthians 4:4.

10. "Who hath fashioned a god, or molten an image that is profitable for nothing?"

Note the cases of Jeroboam (I Kings 12:28); Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:1,14); and Demetrius (Acts 19:24), - all makers of idols.

11. "Behold, all his fellows shall be put to shame; and the workmen, they are of men; let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; they shall fear, they shall be put to shame together."

Not only idol-makers, but also idol worshippers, all who join themselves to idols (Numbers 25:3) shall come to shame. The idol-maker is of human origin and how can a mere man make the divine? Before the judgment bar of God all these idolators shall fear and be ashamed, in contrast to the true Israel of God. (Galatians 6:16)

12. "The smith maketh an axe, and worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with his strong arm: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint."

A glimpse is given into the workshop of the maker of metal or iron idols. See Exodus 32:8. "The description in the last clause seems intended to convey these several ideas: that the man who undertakes to make a god is himself mortal, subject to ordinary human infirmities; that his god is utterly unable to relieve him or supply his wants; and that neither these considerations nor the toil which he must undergo in order to attain his end are sufficient to deter him from his self-tormenting efforts."⁴

Rev. J. Williams, missionary in the islands of the Pacific related that idol-makers there were known to refrain from eating food and drinking water, perhaps as long as three days at a time, while making an idol.

13. "The carpenter stretcheth out a line; he marketh it out with a pencil; he shapeth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compasses, and shapeth it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house."

As the foregoing verse shows the workshop of the workman in iron, here we see the workman in wood in the midst of the process of making a wooden idol. Many of the gods and goddesses of ancient times, such as those of the Greeks, as well as the Buddhas of the present are made in human form. While the Greek statuary of their idols represents almost perfectly the human form, the Buddhas of the Orient today,

dwelling in the Buddhist temples, are most often far from being works of art.

14. "He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the holm-tree and the oak, and strengtheneth for himself one among the trees of the forest; he planteth a fir-tree, and the rain doth nourish it."

The foregoing verses bring into view the idol-maker, and idol manufacture. Now there comes more into view the idol material. The main idea of the verse is "that the idolator not only chooses suitable trees, but plants and raises them for the purpose."⁵ "We all carry some seed of this madness, which cannot in any way be rooted out, but continually buds and blossoms, if we are not cleansed anew by the Spirit of the Lord".⁶

15. "Then shall it be for a man to burn; and he taketh thereof, and warmeth himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto."

The purpose for which the wood is used is stated. From the same trees wood is used to supply physical wants, and to make objects of worship. How absurd to worship the same material that is used for fuel!

16. "He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire."

Common domestic use is made of the wood from the trees of the forest. This verse pictures him in the midst of the process of using this wood.

17. "And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it and worshippeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god."

Here is a flagrant violation of the second commandment. See I Kings 18:26-28 for an illustration of the second part of this verse, and contrast Daniel 3:17,29; 6:16,20-22,27.

18. "They know not, neither do they consider: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand."

God sent spiritual blindness upon them as a judgment for their own sins. "And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do these things which are not fitting". (Romans 1:28) See II Corinthians 4:3-4.

"God is just, and never punishes anyone without a just cause, and does not blind a man, unless he deserves it, and voluntarily shuts his eyes"⁷

5. Alexander.

6. John Calvin.

7. *ibid.*

19. "And none calleth to mind, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?"

The idolator is so ^{sp}iritually blinded that he fails to see how absurd, and how abominable it is to fall down and worship one end of a log, the other end of which he had burned as fuel in his fire.

20. "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

The idolator is disappointed, deceived, and not delivered.

This verse is "another statement of the reason why he cannot see his conduct in its just light or describe it in correct terms, namely, because his very mind or heart is deceived, and this because it feeds on ashes. Feeding on ashes is a figure for the love and prosecution of unsatisfying objects, analogous to feeding on wind, Hosea 12:1"⁸

21. "Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant; O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me."

"These things" evidently refer to the foregoing statements about the folly of idolatry. thIsrael is to remember and guard themselves from idols. See I John 5:21. For Israel is Jehovah's servant, His workmanship and no one can serve two masters. Forgetfulness of God leads to idolatry. This command to Israel to remember, with the reason therefor, is followed by the comforting assurance that God will not forget Israel. See Isaiah 49:15.

22. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions; and as a cloud thy sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."

Over against the fact of sin, which is as a cloud separating God and His people (Isaiah 59:2), is the act of redeeming grace, by which Jehovah has blotted out sin, just as the sun removes the dark cloud from the sky. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us". (Psalm 103:12)

Such glorious redemption provided is the basis for the call to repentance. "The antecedent redemption is the ground of, and motive to, repentance. We do not repent in order that he may redeem us, but because He hath redeemed us (Zechariah 12:10; Luke 24:47; Acts 3:18,19."⁹

23. "Sing, O ye heavens, for Jehovah hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and will glorify himself in Israel."

8. Alexander.

9. Fausset

This verse has been interpreted, we believe, rightly, as the joyful response of the Church to Jehovah's announcement of redemption found in verse 22. Because of the redemption of His people, which means the glorification of Himself in Israel, all nature is called upon to sing praises unto Jehovah. Compare the songs of praise in Revelation 5:8-14, and the fourfold Hallelujah Revelation 19:1-6.

Verse 21 calls to remember, verse 22 to return, and verse 23 to rejoice, a climactic note to chapter 44.

24. "Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb: I am Jehovah, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth (who is with me?)";

Verses 24-28 are both a summary of what has gone before, and an introduction to the section to follow. (See Introduction to Chapter 44).

Jehovah, the God of power here speaks. He is Israel's Redeemer (Revelation 5:9), and Maker (Psalm 139:13-16; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 2:10), the Creator of all things, Jehovah alone.

25. "That frustrateth the signs of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish."

The God of all power is also the God of all wisdom. (See subject of Chapter 41). "The whole verse is descriptive of Jehovah as convicting all prophets except his own, of folly and imposture, by falsifying their prognostications".¹⁰

In the time of Cyrus in Babylon the enchanters, the Chaldean diviners and wise men failed when Daniel succeeded. See Daniel 5:6-8, 25-28. See I Corinthians 1:20-31 - "Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God".

26. "That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited; and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof;"

God is not only revealed in creation and in providence, but also in his word. He not only frustrates heathen prophecies (verse 25), but fulfils His prophecies. See Luke 24:44; Acts 2:16-21; II Peter 1:19-21. "The word translated confirming has here the same sense as in Jeremiah 29:10; 33:14, namely, that of bringing a promise or prophecy to pass. His servant may refer primarily and directly to the writer himself, but considered as one of a class, who are then distinctly mentioned in the other member as his messengers."¹¹ Another interpretation of 'servant' is that it here refers to Israel as hearer of the prophetic word, while 'messengers' are the prophets of Israel. Compare Isaiah 42:19.

The last part of the verse contains a definite prophecy of the restoration of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. Jeremiah 32:15,44.

27. "That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers."

¹⁰.Alexander.

¹¹.ibid.

Two views of this verse are worthy of our consideration. (1) "This may be understood as a description of God's power over nature and elements, with or without an allusion to the passage of the Red Sea at the exodus"¹², or (2) "The phraseology recalls the drying up of the Red Sea, 51:10; 43:16, but the reference here, according to 42:15; 50:2, is to future things, and indeed to the drying up of the Euphrates, which Cyrus diverted into the enlarged reservoir of Sepharvaim, so that the water fell to a foot in depth, and one 'could go over on foot' (Herod 1.189). This made it possible both for the conquerors to cross and the exiles to issue forth from the prison of the imperial city, girt as it was with both natural and artificial lines of water, 11:15."¹³

28. "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."

This is a definite prophecy giving for the first time in Isaiah the name of Cyrus as Jehovah's agent for delivering Israel from Babylon, and describing the nature of his mission. "He began his reign about 550 years before Christ, and this prophecy was therefore delivered not far from a hundred and fifty years before he ascended the throne. None but God himself, or he whom God inspired, could have mentioned so long before, the name of him who should deliver the Jewish people from bondage."¹⁴

"Cyrus, according to Josephus, heard of this prophecy of Isaiah delivered so long before; hence he was induced to do that which was contrary to Oriental policy, to aid in restoring the captive Jews and rebuilding their temple and city".¹⁵ See Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3.

12. Alexander.

13. Dal.

14. Barnes.

15. Fausset.

Jehovah, the Sovereign and only Savior Chapter 45

Chapter 44:24-28 are the introduction to this chapter, particularly verse 28, while 45:22 contains the climactic appeal.

This chapter tells us (1) Jehovah will use Cyrus as His instrument, verses 1-13. It further sets forth who Cyrus is, how he is to be used, and why; and criticisms or complaints of God's sovereign providence are answered. (2) Jehovah is present in Israel as their only Savior, verses 14-19. This is shown by, 1. the coming in and confession of the heathen, 2. the confusion of idol-worshippers and the salvation of the Church, and 3. by the clearness and character of his revelation to His people. (3) Jehovah's salvation will reach to the ends of the earth, and his sovereignty will be universally recognized; verses 20-25. Heathen gods cannot save. Jehovah is the only Savior. Looking to him is the means of salvation. His sovereignty will be recognized to the shame of unbelievers and to the blessedness of believers. Briefly, we have in the chapter (1) Jehovah's sovereign providence in the career of Cyrus, (2) His saving presence in Israel, (3) His missionary purpose in and through it all.

45:1. "Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut."

Cyrus, who had been introduced by name in 44:28, is directly addressed by Jehovah as "his anointed", the only heathen king so called by Jehovah. Compare Jeremiah 27:6. He is also called Jehovah's shepherd (44:28), "he whom Jehovah loveth" (48:14), and is evidently "the man of my counsel", and the "ravenous bird from the east" of 46:11. He is the hero whom Jehovah selects, sustains, and causes to succeed as his tool, Isaiah 41:2,25. The victorious career of Cyrus, his conquering many nations, is prominent in the records of Greek historians. To "loose the loins" probably means to render feeble, fill with fear, disable. See Daniel 5:6.

The last part of the verse is particularly appropriate to the taking of Babylon. "All the streets of Babylon, leading on each side of the river, were secured by two leaved brazen gates, and these were providentially left open when Cyrus's forces entered the city in the night, through the channel of the river, in the general disorder occasioned by the great feast which was then celebrated; otherwise, says Herodotus, the Persians would have been shut up in the bed of the river, as in a net, and all destroyed. The gates of the palace were also imprudently opened to ascertain the occasion of the tumult; when the two parties under Gábrias and Gadatas rushed in, got possession of the palace, and slew the King. Nahum 2:6¹ See Daniel, chapter 5. Darius, the Mede, received the Kingdom of Babylon probably at the hand of Cyrus.

2. "I will go before thee, and will make the rough places smooth; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron."

Jehovah will prepare the way of the conquests of Cyrus, removing obstacles. Compare the prophecy of the fall of Babylon. Isaiah 13:4-17.

3. "And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that it is I Jehovah, who call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel."

Cyrus acquired ²an enormous wealth in his conquests. He conquered Croesus, the wealthiest monarch of the times, and is said to have secured from him more than 126,000,000 pounds sterling, besides the treasures of Babylon which became his spoil.

The purpose of God giving prosperity to Cyrus was primarily that God be glorified. The One who foretold his success and prosperity even calling him by name some 150 years before he ascended the throne, is the same One who brought it to pass, Jehovah, the God of Israel. Compare purpose of God in dealing with Pharaoh, Exodus 7:17a; 8:10,22; 9:14. It was that his sovereignty and sole deity be recognized by the leading monarch of the day. Note the effect upon Cyrus in Ezra 1:2.

4. "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me."

A second purpose of Jehovah in using Cyrus is here set forth, namely for the deliverance of His chosen people. Jehovah, the sovereign God, caused the Pharaoh of the Exodus to fail that Israel be delivered from the bondage of Egypt. The same God caused Cyrus, another heathen monarch, to succeed for the deliverance of Israel from the captivity of Babylon. "Thou hast not known me" may either mean that he was not a follower of the true religion, or that the name was given long before he did or could know anything of him who gave it!²

5. "I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God. I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me;"

Jehovah, the sole Deity, not only named Cyrus, but also promised to equip him. He will strengthen him, in contrast to weakening the kings he will overcome (verse 1). Jehovah is the King of all kings. See comment on last clause of verse 4 which parallels the last clause of this verse.

6. "That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am Jehovah, and there is none else."

Here is the third purpose God had in calling and equipping Cyrus, a foreshadowing of His glorious missionary purpose as set forth in the latter part of this chapter. It was that there might be the acknowledgement of Jehovah as the only God throughout the heathen world. See Exodus 9:16, and Malachi 1:1

7. "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things."

"Evil" in this verse does not refer to sin, for God is not the author of sin, but evil in the sense of calamity such as war, in opposition to peace in the same connection. See Job 2:10 where "evil" evidently refers to Job's afflictions and calamities.

"Good and evil; prosperity and adversity abound in the world at all times; and all that is required in order to a correct understanding of this passage is the general statement that all these things are under providential direction".³ Jehovah is sovereign over all powers and forces and conditions - all things.

8. "Distil, ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, that it may bring forth salvation, and let it cause righteousness to spring up together; I, Jehovah, have created it."

This is a poetical verse, a kind of "lyrid intermezzo" in which heaven and earth are asked to join. The heaven is summoned to shower gracious gifts or blessings, and the earth to bring forth gracious fruits, all through the power and according to the purpose of Jehovah "that doeth all these things". See Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 34:26; Isaiah 12:3; Isaiah 61:11. "There cannot be found anywhere a more beautiful description of a genuine revival of pure religion than in this verse."⁴

9. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?"

Criticism or opposition to the sovereignty of God is anticipated, characterized, and condemned. Perhaps there was complaint of Him using Cyrus, a heathen monarch as His tool; or criticism that he had the whole world in view⁵ his missionary purpose. The utter foolishness and sin of man, a fragile creature, striving with or denying the sovereign power and infinite wisdom and skill of his Creator are set forth, and upon such a man woe is pronounced. See Isaiah 29:16; Romans 9:20,21.

10. "Woe unto him that saith unto a father, What begettest thou? or to a woman, With what travailest thou?"

The thought of the foregoing verse is continued and emphasized. The man who finds fault with Jehovah's dealings is like a wicked foolish child who complains to his parents about his own birth.

"It would be the rudest and most revolting attack on a relation of inviolable delicacy and mystery; and yet Israel is guilty of this in making the hidden providential government of its God the subject of expostulation."⁵

11. "Thus saith Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask me of the things that are to come; concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me."

"The names by which he calls Himself express His absolute blamelessness and absolute supremacy over Israel".⁶ There are two common

3. Barnes.

4. *ibid*.

5. Del.

6. *ibid*

interpretations of the words of Jehovah, the second being our preference. (1) They are a reproof. "Do you presume to question me, and dictate to me concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, to do what I will with mine own? (see verses 9,10)"⁷ (2) They are an invitation to inquire concerning Jehovah's dealings, by consulting His Word and by prayer. "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deuteronomy 29:29) "We may not strive with our Maker by passionate complaints, but we may wrestle with him by faithful and fervent prayer."⁸ Genesis 32:26; Hosea 12:4.

12. "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens; and all their host have I commanded."

"I" is here emphatic - the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth. Genesis 1:1,6,26,27; Hebrews 11:3; Psalm 33:9.

13. "I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let my exiles go free, not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts."

"I" is again emphatic, as in the foregoing verse. "Him" refers to Cyrus. See Isaiah 41:2; 45:1-6; 44:28; II Chronicles 36:22-23; Isaiah 52:3.

"All the anxiety of the exiles is calmed by this 'in righteousness', which traces back the revolution effected by Cyrus to Jehovah's righteousness, that is, His dealings as directed by absolute love, and aiming simply at His people's, and in reality the heathen's, welfare."⁹ As a fact of history Cyrus not only freed the exiles, and without exacting a price for their ransom, but also restored to them the temple treasures. (Ezra 1:7-11)

14. "Thus saith Jehovah, The labor of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall go after thee; in chains they shall come over; and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God."

Here is a foreshadowing of Pentecost - Jehovah's saving presence in Israel, convincing and converting the heathen.

"The most natural interpretation of the passage is the common one, which makes it a prophecy of moral and spiritual conquests, to be wrought by the church over the nations, and, as one illustrious example, by the Jew's religion over the heathenism of many countries, not excepting the literal Ethiopia, as we learn from Acts 8:27."¹⁰

"They who formerly were haughty, and with lofty brow despised the Church, shall submit to her, when it shall be known that she is the sanctuary of the true God."¹¹

7. Lowthe.

8. Matthew Henry.

9. Del.

10. Alexander.

11. John Calvin.

12. In this passage "in the prophet's view Jehovah and His church form an inseparable unity, as in Jeremiah 33:16; I Corinthians 12:12, Compare ~~more Hebrew~~ Revelation 3:9, a passage thoroughly Isaianic in tone."¹²

15. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

One interpretation is that this verse contains the confession of the heathen, another that it is the response of the church, a third that it is the exclamation of the prophet. In any case the thought seems to be that "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform", similar to Paul's utterance in Romans 11:33-36.

16. "They shall be put to shame, yea, confounded, all of them; they shall go into confusion together that are makers of idols."

This and the following verse set forth a two-fold effect of the revelation of Jehovah. To the idolator it means shame and confusion.

17. "But Israel shall be saved by Jehovah with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be put to shame nor confounded world without end."

This is the opposite of the foregoing verse, and a great verse on the subject of salvation. The Savior is Jehovah (Matthew 1:21). The saved is the true Israel (Romans 2:28,29). The salvation, not a temporary deliverance but everlasting salvation, Matthew 25:46 "made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God, ^{ing} throughout eternity."¹³

18. "For thus saith Jehovah that created the heavens, the God that formed the earth and made it, that established it and created it not a waste, that formed it to be inhabited: I am Jehovah; and there is none else."

Jehovah revealed himself as "God in the full and exclusive sense"¹⁴ in His works of creation. He created the earth for a definite purpose, to be inhabited. Man was the crowning work of His creation.

19. "I have not spoken in secret, in a place of the land of darkness; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I, Jehovah, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right."

In contrast to the obscurity, hopelessness, and deception of the heathen oracles, the word of Jehovah is spoken openly, in the light; Isaiah 48:16; John 18:20. Those who truly seek Him will be satisfied, profited, Jeremiah 29:13,14. Jehovah, mighty to save, speaks what is right and just and true (Psalm 19:7-10) and fulfils his promises. See Isaiah 45:23.

20. "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations; they have no knowledge that carry the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save."

12. Del.

13. Shorter Catechism.

14. Del.

This is a call to and characterization of the escaped of the nations. These persons addressed, according to Alexander, were the idolators still left who were neither converted nor destroyed, the escaped of the nations who survived the judgments sent by God upon them. "If there are any still absurd enough to carry about a wooden god and pray to one who cannot save, let them assemble and draw near".¹⁵

21. "Declare ye; and bring it forth; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath showed this from ancient time? who hath declared it of old? have not I, Jehovah? and there is no God else besides me, a just God and a Saviour: there is none besides me."

See Chapter 41:26 and notes. Jehovah, is not only sole Deity, the only One who can predict future events, but also a "just God and a Savior". "None besides is fit to rule..None besides is able to help".¹⁶ He is just, having salvation (Zechariah 9:9). See Romans 3:26.

22. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

In view of the glorious fact that Jehovah is a just God and a Savior, (verse 21) the gospel invitation is here given. This verse tells us (1) the condition of the gospel - "Look" (John 3:14,15). To believe is to look (Hebrews 12:2). Alexander tells us this word look denotes the act of turning around in order to look in a different direction. It may be translated "Turn unto me". This is repentance. (Acts 14:15). Believe and repent. Faith is the motive of repentance. (2) The promise of the gospel - Salvation, from sin. See Isaiah 1:18; 44:22. Not temporal deliverance, but spiritual salvation is emphasized by Isaiah. (3) The universality of the offer. 49:6b; 45:20. "We've a story to tell to the nations". (4) The ground of this gospel - "the exclusive deity of Jehovah," "a just God and a Savior" Romans 3:26. Acts 4:13. Must forsake all other gods for Jehovah - Jesus, Jehovah must reign supreme and reign alone in my heart and life.

23. "By myself have I sworn, the word is gone forth from my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."

In this closing paragraph of the chapter the call issues into a challenge, the challenge unto an invitation, and the invitation into a confirmation of the glorious truth of the prophecy of the universal recognition of the sovereignty of Jehovah. "It does not necessarily predict that all shall be converted to Him, since the terms are such as to include both a voluntary and a compulsory submission, and in one of these ways all without exception shall yet recognize him as their rightful sovereign".¹⁷ Note how Paul uses this passage in applying it to the final judgment (Romans 14:9-12), and as a climax to that matchless Christological passage in Philipians 2:5-11.

24. "Only in Jehovah, it is said of me, is righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come; and all they that were incensed against him shall be put to shame."

15. Alexander.

16. Matthew Henry

17. Alexander.

Jehovah will not only be sovereign over all, but the only Savior to those who voluntarily submit to him. "These who shall confess that their righteousness is placed in God will approach to him."¹⁸ John 12:32; II Corinthians 5:21; 12:9; Philippians 4:13; II Timothy 4:17-18. Compare the last clause with verse 16, chapter 41:11; Psalm 72:9; 110:2. To the believer there is salvation and strength, to the unbeliever, shame.

25. "In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

The seed of Israel here means the true Church out of all mankind, Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:28,29; Colossians 3:11. In Jehovah, by His free grace, the seed of Israel is pardoned and accepted, Romans 3:24, 25. Therefore, the redeemed shall sing His praise. "But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Galatians 6:14a).

The Gods of Babylon and the God of Israel
Chapter 46

Jehovah supreme in Babylon is set forth in Chapters 46 and 47; He is sovereign over the gods of Babylon (46) and the city of Babylon (47). See Jeremiah 51:44. Chapter 46:1-2 gives us an exhibition of the impotence of the gods of Babylon issuing ~~issuing~~ in their defeat and humiliation. Verses 3-13 present in contrast the omnipotence of the God of Israel bringing to His people deliverance and glory. Jehovah is the bearer of His people, whereas the gods of Babylon all have to be carried. Jehovah is incomparable in His power to predict future events and to bring them to pass; for instance, the career of Cyrus. Finally, He is mighty to save, the Giver of Salvation to Zion. From the basic contrast of this chapter are drawn the exhortations to three classes of people, introduced by the words, Hearken (verse 3), Remember (8,9), and Hearken (verse 12).

46:1 "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols are upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: the things that ye carried about are made a load, a burden to the weary beast."

Bel was a sun-god, and Nebo god of literature and science, chief deities of Babylon. "Some make Bel to be a contraction of Baal; others rather think not, but that it was Belus, one of their first kings, who after his death was deified. As Bel was a deified prince, so (some think) Nebo was a deified prophet, for so Nebo signifies.. The names of these idols were taken into the names of their princes, Bel into Belshazzar's, Nebo into Nebuchadnezzar's."¹

The fate of these gods is here set forth. They are falling. Their idols are being carried in their impotence. We are told that after Cyrus took Babylon these idols were carried away as booty. See Isaiah 2:18; 21:9; Jeremiah 50:2-4; 51:44.

2. "They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity."

The Babylonian gods are fallen. They are helpless to save their own images. They have become captives themselves. See II Samuel 5:21.

3. "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, that have been borne by me from their birth, that have been carried from the womb."

In contrast to the Babylonian gods who had to be carried, Jehovah had been the bearer of His people from their beginning. See Numbers 11:12; Deuteronomy 1:31; 32:11; Exodus 19:4; Isaiah 63:9; Isaiah 40:11.

4. "And even to old age I am he, and even to hear hairs will I carry you: I have made and I will bear; yea, I will carry, and will deliver."

As in the past, so in the future, God, who made His people will continue to bear them and will save them. His loving kindness changes not, Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8.

"Thou didst create us, not only, that we might be human beings, but that we might be thy children; and therefore thou wilt continue till the end to exercise continually towards us the care of a father and of a mother."²

5. "To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?"

See Chapter 40:18,25 and notes on these verses.

6. "Such as lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, they hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god; they fall down, yea, they worship."

Compare 40:19,20 and 44:9-20 with notes on these verses. Such idolatry was practised by the children of Israel at the foot of Sinai (Exodus 32:2-4), by Jeroboam (I Kings 12:28), and by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians (Daniel 3:1-15).

7. "They bear it upon the shoulder, they carry it, and set it in its place, and it standeth; from its place shall it not remove: yea, one may cry unto it, yet can it not answer, nor save him out of his trouble."

In contrast to the incomparable Jehovah, mighty to save, the Bearer of His people, is the idol, the work of man's hands, helpless, immovable, deaf and dumb, with no power to save its worshippers. See Psalm 115:4-8; Isaiah 45:20.

8. "Remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors."

"That to which the 'this' refers is the worthlessness of the idols and idolatry. Those addressed are...those who are not definitely committed to apostasy, but fluctuate between Jehovaism and heathenism, inclining to the latter."³

"In order to be manly, we must be godly; for man was made 'in the image of God', and only rises to his true dignity when joined to God; virtue is derived from the Latin, 'vir'-a man."⁴ See I Corinthians 14:20.

9. "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me."

See Chapter 42:9; 45:5;6,21,22, and notes on these verses.

10. "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

2. John Calvin.

3. Del.

God has a purpose and pleasure which are revealed in prophecy, and which will be established by His power. (Isaiah 40:8). See Isaiah 45:21; Genesis 3:15; Acts 4:28; 5:39; Ephesians 1:11.

11. "Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country; yea, I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it."

This is a definite illustration of God's foreknowledge and power stated in the foregoing verse. The "ravenous bird" evidently refers to Cyrus from Persia, swift in his marches, who had the golden eagle for his standard. See 41:2,25; 45:1-6; 44:28; 45:13; 48:14,15. Psalm 76:10; Acts 4:28.

12. "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness."

Compare the people here addressed with those of verse 3, and 8, 48:1; and Acts 7:51. The stout-hearted are those who are stubborn in their rebellion against God. To such sinners as these God has a message.

13. "I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory."

"The sense in which salvation can be referred to the righteousness of God is clear from Isaiah 1:27. The exhibition of God's righteousness consists in the salvation of his people and the simultaneous destruction of his enemies".⁴ His righteousness will be revealed and will bring salvation and glory to Israel. See Romans 1:17; 3:21.

Jehovah's Judgment upon the City of Babylon Chapter 47

Chapter 46 presents the impotence of the gods of Babylon in contrast to the omnipotence of Jehovah who will bring salvation and glory to His people. This chapter (47) foretells the judgment of God upon the city of Babylon. This city (1) will be in the dust, dethroned, disgraced, despondent, verses 1-7; (2) in distress and desolation, verses 8-11, (3) it is doomed to destruction with none to deliver, verses 12-15. The reason for such a fearful judgment is sin, particularly the sins of cruelty, pride and sorcery. Compare this chapter with the prophecy of the fall of Babylon found in Chapter 13.

47:1. "Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate."

The exhibition of God's righteousness bringing salvation and glory to Israel (46:13) will bring destruction and shame to Babylon, figuratively addressed as virgin daughter of Babylon, and daughter of the Chaldeans. From royalty and luxury she will come down to humiliation and dethronement. Contrast the humiliation of the king of Ninevah, Jonah 3:6.

2. "Take the millstones, and grind meal; remove thy veil, strip off the train, uncover the leg, pass through the rivers."

The judgment upon Babylon will be like that of a queen coming down to the drudgery and degradation of a female slave.

3. "Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and will spare no man."

Babylon will come to exposure and disgrace. Jehovah will take vengeance (Psalm 94:1,2; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30-31; Revelation 18:5,8). His judgment will be complete.

4. "Our Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel."

While this chapter exhibits the righteousness of God in the destruction of His enemies, this one verse exhibits the positive side of His righteousness in the salvation of His people. Compare Revelation 19:1,2; Isaiah 1:27; and 46:13 with notes.

5. "Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called The mistress of kingdoms."

The picture of judgment proceeds. To Babylon will come sorrow, despondency, loss of power and prestige.

6. "I was wroth with my people, I profaned mine inheritance, and gave them into thy hand: thou didst show them no mercy; upon the aged hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke."

Such judgment would come upon Babylon because when Jehovah used her as his instrument for the chastisement of Israel she was cruel and inhuman. See Zechariah 1:15; Isaiah 13:16; Deuteronomy 28:50.

7. "And thou saidst, I shall be mistress forever; so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end thereof."

"Such inconsiderate cruelty can only be explained by the delusion that her supremacy was eternal, that no day of reckoning could ever come to her".¹

8. "Now therefore hear this, thou that art given to pleasures, that sittest securely, that sayest in thy heart, I am, and there is none else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children."

Further sins of Babylon are luxury, false security, self-exaltation, "atheistic self-sufficiency"², confidence in an eternal future free from widowhood and loss of children. See Daniel 5:1-4; 4:30; 11:36; Revelation 18:3-8.

9. "But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood; in their full measure shall they come upon thee, in the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thine enchantments."

Suddenly "she will experience loss of husband and children in all its extent and all its depth, despite the multitude of her magical arts... Babylon was the birthplace of astrology, the home of magic."³ See Daniel 2:2; 4:7; 5:7.

10. "For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness; thou hast said, None seeth me; thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thy heart, I am, and there is none else besides me."

The object of their trust was their own wickedness rather than the only God, omniscient and omnipresent. They had perverted minds and proud hearts. See Psalm 52:7; Jeremiah 23:24; Romans 1:22; verse 8.

11. "Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know the dawning thereof; and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it away; and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou knowest not."

As a result of their sins judgment would come upon thee suddenly, surprisingly, and irresistibly. This judgment would be evil, mischief, desolation, and is illustrated in Daniel 5:25-30.

12. "Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast labored from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail."

1. Skinner.

2. G. A. S.

3. Del.

Babylonians with their

A challenge to the sorcerers to do their best. Compare Acts 13:8-12.

13. "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels: let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up. and save thee from the things that shall come upon thee."

In the multitude of their counsels there is weariness instead of wisdom.

"The thing referred to in the passage before us, and which was practised in Babylon was, probably, that of forecasting future events, or telling what would occur by the observation of the positions of the heavenly bodies."⁴ Such foretellers are called upon to save their people from calamity.

14. "Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame; it shall not be a coal to warm at, nor a fire to sit before."

These Babylonian astrologers will be quickly and completely consumed. They are utterly powerless to save themselves, much less their people from destruction.

15. "Thus shall the things be unto thee wherein thou hast labored: they that have trafficked with thee from thy youth shall wander every one to his quarter; there shall be none to save thee."

Alexander suggests the following as a possible interpretation of this verse: "Thy astrologers, et cetera, are utterly destroyed, and as for thy dealers, they wander home, et cetera, widely different in fate, but both alike in this, that they have thee defenceless in the hour of extremity." Babylon is doomed to destruction with none to deliver.