

THE  
**PROPHET MALACHI.**

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

WE are arrived to the last of the minor Prophet's writings, with which the Sacred Canon of the Old Testament closeth; and a very sweet portion of the inspired work this forms. *Malachi* signifies angel or messenger; and it should seem from that passage we have in the first Chapter, and 13th verse of *Haggai's* prophecy, that in that period of the Church, the servants and messengers of the Lord were called *Malachi-Jehovah*, Angels or Messengers of the LORD. We have not the smallest account in scripture concerning *Malachi*, who he was, or from what tribe he sprung; and hence some have conjectured, that he was in reality what his name signifies, an angel. But this must be wholly conjectural, and very improbable. The time of his ministry appears to have been somewhat more than three hundred and fifty years before the coming of Christ. The scope of his prophecy is to prepare the Church for the Lord's appearing; and this is done in pointing expressly to the person and office of John the Baptist, as Christ's forerunner. And as GOD the HOLY GHOST was now with this servant's ministry, about to close the whole tenor of prophecy, and a long dark night was to take place, until that harbinger of day should come as Christ's herald; we have sketched some more striking features of the Lord Jesu's ministry, in addition to what the other Prophets had been commissioned to give, concerning our LORD's person and character. And the several quotations made from this prophecy of *Malachi* in the New Testament, not only serves to confirm the authority of it, but to recommend it more strongly to the heart. See Matt. xi. 10. Mark i. 2. Luke i. 17. Matt. xvii. 12. Mark ix. 11, 12. Luke vii. 27. Rom. ix. 13. I only add a prayer to God the Holy Ghost, that both on our entrance on this blessed prophecy, progress through it, and in our closing of it, as the scripture with which the Almighty Lord hath sealed up the visions to his servants the Prophets, the minds both of Writer and Reader of this Commentary, may be graciously guided by the Spirit of truth, into all truth, to his glory and our happiness in Christ Jesus. Amen.

## CHAP. I.

## CONTENTS.

*The Lord is expostulating with Israel in this Chapter, on their ingratitude; and pointing out in his providences and grace, his distinguishing favor to Jacob, and his judgment on Esau.*

## THE burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

The title of this prophecy as a *burden*, is not meant to express a matter grievous in its weight, but blessed in its importance. It is the Lord's burden, and brings with it the Lord's blessing. Burdensome indeed to sinners, but refreshing to saints.

2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? *Was not Esau Jacob's brother*, saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,

Every word in this address of the Lord is weighty, and deserves the closest attention. Reader, pray observe how the Lord opens his discourse, with referring to his love. Yes! this is the source, the fountain, and cause of all Israel's mercies; and the subject begins in eternity, in the gift of Christ, God's dear Son, and reaches through time to eternity, for ever. And observe further, the insensibility of God's people here pointed out by the question, *wherein hast thou loved us?* Reader! do not in considering the Israel of old, as spoken of in this Chapter, overlook the Israel now. The Lord's Israel are all the same in every age in themselves; ignorant, ungrateful, and for the most part lost to a sense of distinguishing mercies. Romans iii. 9. I beg the Reader, before he goeth further, to turn back to Jeremiah xxxi. the four first verses. And when he hath duly pondered the wonderful subject, I would have him particularly to attend to this doctrine of distinguishing grace, here preached to the Church by the Lord himself. The Lord demands concerning the fact, *Was not Esau Jacob's brother?* Yes! he was, yea, his *elder* brother, and therefore as such, concerning the right of inheritance, was *legally* intitled, and by the Lord's own appointment, to the birth-right. But gospelly considered, he was set aside, and by the Lord himself from it, and *Jacob* preferred. And what tended to confirm this doctrine yet more, and to make it unanswerably conclusive, was, that this choice of the younger, and rejection of the elder, was in the decree of the Lord, before that either was born. *Paul*, the Apostle, was commissioned by the Holy Ghost, in the after ages of the Church, to preach on this Sermon of the Lord, and to make this comment upon it; and certainly by that authority, the doctrine is laid down with a firmness of divine decision none can safely dispute. I beg the Reader to turn to the Apostle's subject. Rom. ix. from 6 verse to the end, and then see the history of this memorable transaction. Gen. xxv. 20 to the end, and Gen. xxvii. throughout. And I beg further to call the Reader's attention to

this doctrine, from the same scriptural authority, that all these tokens of distinguishing grace, personally to Jacob, was not limited to Jacob, but included all the seed of Jacob. In confirmation, see Gen. xxviii. 1—14. Hence therefore, the burden of *Malachi's* prophecy you see is a blessed burden indeed; for it contains Christ in his fulness, suitability, and all-sufficiency. The blessings given to Jacob, it is plain, were not temporal, for he no sooner had it, than he was compelled to flee for his life; and few and evil, as he told Pharaoh at the close of his pilgrimage, had been his days. Gen. xlvii. 9. But the whole of this distinguishing grace and love the Lord had to Jacob and to his seed, as beheld in Christ, and accepted in Christ, was in respect to the blessings of redemption. Reader! what a vast thought is here, in proof of the love of God in Christ, being set forth altogether free, without all motives of good or evil, in the happy receivers of this unspeakable mercy; not only before they have done good or evil, but before they were born! Reader! do not turn hastily away from this subject. Pause over it. How many are there the distinguishing objects of this rich, free mercy in Christ, who through the weakness of their faith, and their inattention to divine things, even after partaking of the sweet effects of it, in regenerating, converting, renewing grace, are frequently without full and clear views of their happy and unspeakably blessed state in Christ, in the enjoyment of it?

3 And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste, for the dragons of the wilderness.

4 Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.

5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

The Apostle to the Hebrews explains this account of *Esau*, who is said to be a *fornicator*, and a *profane person*. Heb. xii. 16. left to a dissolute mind, being rejected, or as this scripture speaks, *hated* of God. And so all his race. For, when it is said, as in this scripture, that his mountains and heritages were laid waste, it is meant spiritually so. As the mountain of the Lord's house is put for the Church, Micah iv. 1, 2. so here is meant by the mountain of *Esau*, the state of reprobation. *Esau*, and the seed of *Esau*, void of grace here, and no part in the glory of Christ hereafter. Mount *Seir* was a type of desolation, inhabited by *Esau* and his seed. Gen. xxxvi. 8.

6 ¶ A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine

honour? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name: and ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name.

7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar, and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person, saith the LORD of hosts.

These are very strong expressions of expostulation. God appeals to the common principles and laws of nature. Children and servants do reverence to them that have the rule over them. How much more is due to the Lord, as the common Father of his people. Reader! how heightened is this principle to believers, who are adopted in and through Christ, into the family and household of faith, and are permitted, yea, commanded to cry, Abba, Father! Gal. iv. 6. How aggravated the sin to the priests of God; and all believers in Christ are made kings and priests to God and the Father. Rev. i. 6. I humbly conceive, that there is an eye in this expostulation to the Pharisaical pride and self-righteousness of men, which in after ages manifested itself in opposition to the righteousness of Christ. Every thing offered without an eye to Christ is polluted. It is, in the language of the Prophet, *a lame and blind sacrifice*. And as under the law, whatever was blemished was rejected, so in the Gospel, all offerings but the one perfect offering of the Lord Jesus Christ is blemished and rejected.

9 And now, I pray you, beseech God, that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons, saith the LORD of hosts.

This verse comes in as a very affectionate advice after the strong expostulation going before, and which proves what all the other parts of God's holy word declare, that *the Lord is very pitiful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great mercy*. Isaiah xxx. 18.

10 Who *is there* even among you that would shut the doors *for nought*? neither do ye kindle *fire* on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

Here again, the Lord sheweth the unworthiness and ungraciousness of man, and his unprofitableness to God. All which, if I mistake not, is introduced with a view to heighten the abundant grace and goodness of God. It is as if the Lord had said, though none of you will so much as open the doors of my house without a reward, yet my love, and the blessings I give are all free, and without restraint, yea, against all undeservings.

11 For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name *shall be great* among the Gentiles: and in every place incense *shall be* offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name *shall be* great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

This is a most blessed verse, which comes in amidst the charges the Lord had brought against Israel, like some sweet stream, in a dry and barren land, and it is full of grace from beginning to end. I beg the Reader to remark with me, how blessedly it speaks of that glorious kingdom of grace, in the Lord Jesus Christ, which was to be so extensive, and including both Jew and Gentile; evidently therefore alluding to the days of the Gospel. And I beg him further to remark, that the incense here promised to be offered in every place, is expressly said to be a pure offering. Here again, as plainly pointing to Jesus, whose one offering, once offered, perfected for ever them that are sanctified. No offering but his could be pure; for even the prayers of the saints can only come up pure before God, in, and through Him, and the censer of his offering. See Rev. viii. 4, 5. Heb. x. 14. And I beg to offer one observation more on this delightful verse, which is to remind the Reader, that as a confirmation of the whole, Jehovah twice in it points to his great name, as the cause of all our mercies. So then, from east to west, in the great revolution of the sun's power, through all the varieties of the earth, this blessing is absolutely promised. The North and South are not spoken of indeed, probably because the extremities of both are not habitable; but in every place where the people are, this blessing, and from free sovereign grace alone, shall be given in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed, blessed for ever be Jehovah, for Jesus Christ! Lord! hasten thy kingdom, and fulfil this promise! Amen.

12 ¶ But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* polluted: and the fruit thereof, *even* his meat *is* contemptible.

13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness *is* it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought *that which was* torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hands? saith the LORD.

14 But cursed *be* the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the LORD a corrupt thing: for I *am* a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name *is* dreadful among the heathen.

It should seem, from the solemn expressions with which the Chapter concludes, and connected with what was said in a preceding part, at the sixth verse, concerning the priests that despised the Lord's name; that the threatenings were particularly and personally directed to them. And how truly awful they are! They are charged with despising the Lord's name; polluting the Altar; profaning the table of the Lord; offering the torn, and the lame for sacrifice, and begrudging their labor, yea, counting it a weary service. And are we the priests of the Lord, who minister in holy things, now free from these solemn charges? It is an awful enquiry! If our services, which we declare with our lips, to be *perfect freedom*, become irksome and unpleasant to the heart; if we count our attendance a weariness, and wish to avoid it; if we offer ourselves the torn and the lame; I mean *our offerings*, which are all torn indeed, and lame, instead of the one pure and perfect offering of Christ, as the sole cause of acceptance, or teach our people so;—what shall I say? If we enter upon our ministry for filthy lucre, and when entered, consider the service as a drudgery, and follow it no further than as it brings worldly gain; in either case, or in all these instances, wherein doth the christian priest, of every rank and character, escape the awful sentence pronounced in these solemn charges on the Jewish? Blessed Lord, manifest the greatness of thy grace, as thou hast here proclaimed thy great name, and put thy fear in our hearts; for indeed thy name is dreadful, even among the heathen, however lightly regarded by thy people.

#### REFLECTIONS.

ALMIGHTY Lord! grant both to Writer and Reader grace, in receiving the message of this prophecy, from thy servant the Prophet, that we may indeed accept the whole of it as the burden of the Lord, bringing to us the great things of thy blessed word. We pray to mark the distinguishing grace of our God, in his choice of *Jacob*, and rejection of *Esau*. And we humbly beg the Lord to help our solemn meditations on this subject, with his divine teaching, that under the Holy Ghost's influence, we may give diligence *to make our calling and election sure*. Oh! for grace, to know thee as our Father; yea, our God and Father in Christ Jesus; and to offer thee that honor, and to worship thee and love thee with that holy fear, as becometh the redeemed of the Lord!

And, oh! thou glorious Lord Jesus! hasten, we beseech thee, the auspicious hour, when from sun rise to sun set thy name shall be adored from shore to shore, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. We long to see the dawn of that blessed day, when all the world shall see the salvation of our God; and the knowledge of Jesus

shall cover the earth, as the waters the channel of the great deep. Raise up to thyself, O Lord, faithful disinterested pastors, who will not snuff at thy service, nor count it a weariness and a burden. Oh! for an heart to receive what my Lord hath said, and bow with holy joy and reverence to the revelation. Thou art indeed, O blessed Jesus, a Great King, and thy name is dreadful among the heathen. Prove the greatness of thy sovereignty and power, by reigning in me, and over me, and in all the affections of my heart, the Lord of life and glory. Amen.

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## CHAP. II.

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*This Chapter is not unlike the former in the opening of it; but the Prophet is soon led to speak in Jehovah's name of the Lord Jesus, under the character of Levi. The after part is in reproof for the people's infidelity.*

**A**ND now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.

2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts; I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.

3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, *even* the dung of your solemn feasts; and *one* shall take you away with it.

4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

We have an authority in the opening of this message, to refer it to the priests of the Jewish dispensation. But, I think, without violence, though the priests, as leaders in the temple service, are first in order, yet the doctrine contained in what is here said may be supposed to have respect to all that attended their service, since dung was to be spread upon their solemn feasts. And was it not (I do not say as much, only ask the question,) thus to shew the total inability of all services, and all offerings, to bring glory to God? What otherwise could be the meaning of the punishment, *to curse their blessings*? Is not the curse of the fall upon every person, and every act, until taken away by Christ? And was not these things as shadows ministering to Christ? Oh! that men would now hear, and lay it to heart, both priests and people, that they might arrive at the Prophet's conclusion. Isaiah lxiv. 6, 7.

5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him, *for* the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn away many from iniquity.

All that is here said of *Levi*, must be understood only as typical of the Lord Jesus Christ; for never could it be said of any other but Christ, that *iniquity was not found in his lips*. And though it be spoken as of a thing passed, yet that is no uncommon thing respecting the Lord Jesus. Isaiah spake of him by the spirit of prophecy, as a man despised and rejected of men, ages before he was openly manifested. He *is* despised, said Isaiah, Chapter liii. 3. And John declared him to have been *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*. Rev. xiii. 8. And if we read this blessed account of our Great Levi, the Lord Jesus Christ, and connect with what is here said our relationship to him, what can be equally lovely or blessed? It is with Him, Jehovah declares his covenant was made of peace. And indeed, He is the whole of it. And what endears it to our view under this most delightful character, is, that He, with whom the covenant was and is made, is the Fulfiller of it; the Messenger of it; the Administrator of it; and the Preserver of all the blessings of it. So truly blessed therefore, is this declaration of our God and Father, that we never can be sufficiently thankful for thus revealing his gracious mind and will concerning it. And those two verses come in, in this place, like a parenthesis, to relieve our souls from what was said before, and what follows, concerning the profaneness and impiety of the priests.

7 For the priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he *is* the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law: ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

10 Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously



every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

The Prophet is commissioned again in these verses, to follow up his former reproofs. The low and impoverished state of the Church, in the ordinances, which rightly used to lead to Christ, are real blessings; but if abused, to keep from Christ, become curses; these effects are said to be induced by their perversion. Their persons also are made contemptible. And it should seem also, from what is here said of their partial administration of the law, that they had forgotten their common relationship in Abraham. Hence the expostulation, *have we not all one Father?* Alas! how many evils spring out of one, even a departure from God!

11 ¶ Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

12 The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.

13 And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth *it* with good will at your hand.

14 ¶ Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion and the wife of thy covenant.

15 And did not he make one? yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

16 ¶ For the LORD the God of Israel saith, That he hateth putting away: for *one* covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts:

therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

17 ¶ Ye have wearied the LORD with your words, yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied *him*? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them: or, Where *is* the God of judgment?

These are all so many striking expostulations to the same amount; shewing the people, that both in their conduct towards each other in relative and social duties, as well as in their reverence to the Lord, they had shamefully gone back, and committed transgressions. But in the midst of all, as if to shew man his total unworthiness, and the Lord's own glory, Jehovah describeth himself under that endeared character, the Lord the God of Israel; that is, God in covenant; and therefore as such, *he hateth putting away*. This is the grand cause for which Israel indeed is not put away, after all his rebellions, and all his departures. See similar passages, Isa. xlii. the last verses with the first verses of Isaiah xliii. So again the close of Isaiah xliii. with the opening verses of Isaiah xliv. Ezek. xvi. 58. to the end. Ezek. xxxvi. 31. to end.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! while we take part in the just reproaches of Israel, in their kingdom of priests, in beholding their transgression, and feeling our own; let us seek relief from the distressing contemplation, by directing our view unto the Lord Jesus, our covenant of peace, and our all-sufficient righteousness. Hear what Jehovah, in this blessed portion of the Chapter, saith of Him. *First*, the Lord God bears testimony to Him, that He is the Lord's covenant. *Secondly*, that the Lord gave the people, with all the blessings of the covenant to Him. *Thirdly*, observe the high testimony of Jehovah to his personal holiness and purity, *the law of truth was in his mouth*. And, *lastly*, the success of his undertaking; for he is said to have *turned away many from iniquity*. Pause, Reader! and think with holy rapture and joy, of those glorious credentials to thy precious Redeemer and Mediator. Then turn once more to thy Jesus, and behold Him as Jehovah hath presented him to thee, thy peace through the blood of his cross; and in his righteousness contemplate thy righteousness in Him. Yes! thou blessed, gracious, holy Redeemer! thou art indeed all this, and more to thy people! The covenant, in all its sum and substance, thou art. Thou wert present in its contrivance: the foundation, hope, and end of it, in its fulfilment; the Messenger of it to thy people in the delivery of it; the Administrator of all its blessings in its accomplishment; and the fountain and Keeper of all the grace of it here in this life, and the glory of the whole of it in the life to come. Hail! thou glorious Covenant-Head of thy body the Church! *the fulness that filleth all in all*.

## CHAP. III.

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*The Prophet is here opening to the Church some precious views of the Lord Jesus Christ, in description of his person, glory, majesty, and grace; as he was to appear in the days of his flesh to his people. The sad events of his coming to his enemies are also described. The Chapter closeth in sweet and gracious promises to the Church.*

**B**EHOLD, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

The Prophet in the name of the Lord, opens with a blessed proclamation to the Church. The Lord Jesus had said by one of his servants, behold me! behold me! Isaiah lxx. 1. And now, by another, the Church is called upon to say, he is at the door. It is a blessed confirmation to this scripture, that when the Lord Jesus Christ was come, one of the Evangelists begins his gospel with saying, that this was to fulfil this very writing of this Prophet, as well as Isaiah's prophecy. See Mark i. 2. See also Isaiah xl. 3. There can be no doubt to whom both Prophets, *Isaiah* and *Malachi* referred. John the Baptist was the herald, and forerunner of Christ. I beg the Reader to be very particular in marking the characters here given of Christ, and as he looks upon the account, to keep his eye stedfastly fixed on the person and offices of the Lord Jesus, and he will discover their beautiful correspondence. He is said to be *the Lord whom they seek*. Now we are told in the Gospel, that when John the Baptist came, all men mused in their heart, whether he was the Christ or not, until John totally disclaimed it. See Luke iii. 15. John i. 19—27. And so great was the expectation of the people for Christ's coming, at the time he did, (because by the calculation of the books of the Prophets, the time was arrived,) that we are told, Simeon was waiting constantly for the consolation of Israel. And Anna, an aged woman, departed not night and day from the temple on this account. See Luke ii. 25—38. By suddenly coming to his temple, implies the certainty and swiftness of his approach. And when it is expressly called *his* temple, nothing surely could more decidedly prove his Godhead. For who but the Lord of Hosts can be the Lord of the temple? To ascribe a temple to any but God, would be the highest blasphemy. The word Lord, in this place, is *Adonai*; meaning the bottom and foundation of it. See Isaiah xxviii. 16. And it is no diminution of this glory of the Godhead, to call Christ both the messenger or angel of the covenant, as well as the covenant itself; for the Lord Jesus sustains all characters, as Mediator; and is both Lord of all, and Servant of all. Philip. ii. 5—11. One feature more must be attended to, in this sweet verse. He is said not only to be

the Lord whom his people *seek*, but whom his people *delight in*. Yes! he was truly described by the Prophet to be the *desire of all nations*. And so he is indeed, in the hearts of all his redeemed, in all kingdoms, nations, and climates of the earth. Every poor sinner, once made sensible of his own wants and miseries, and Christ's ability to deliver from them, will have his whole affections centre in Jesus, and Jesus only. Such then was the Prophet's account of Christ; and such the correspondence of Christ to his prediction. Jesus proved his right to the Temple by the power he exercised there, when making a scourge of cords, and driving the buyers and sellers out of it. John ii. 14—17. Some have thought, and justly thought, that this act of Christ in the Temple, was as striking a miracle as any he performed.

2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's sope.

3 And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

The question is solemn, *who may abide the day of his coming*, whether we consider the Lord's *first* coming to a sinner in a way of grace, or hereafter in a day of judgment. Who can describe the soul exercises of the former? And none among the living can know the awfulness of the latter. But, among the faithful, we know that God the Holy Ghost, in his first awakening the soul, becomes the Comforter. And the same Almighty Spirit, by a voice from heaven declared, those dead *blessed that die in the Lord*. This is a striking character of Christ, a Refiner and Purifier of Silver. And so Jesus is, when by his word and fire he breaks the hardened heart of sinners, and melts the soul into softness and love. Oh! the blessedness, when that Almighty Refiner hath fulfilled his promise in purging away all the dross of his people, and taking away all their sin. Isaiah i. 25. Sweet is then the offering of a regenerated, renewed soul, when in Jesus, and through Jesus the offering is made! It will be pleasant to Jehovah, because it is wholly of himself, and to himself in Christ.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in *his* wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that

turn aside the stranger *from his right*, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

This verse seems to stand by itself, and is indeed most awful to all the enemies of God and of his Christ!

6 For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

Here we have the confirmation of that glorious truth, which is the distinguishing character of Jehovah, his unchangeableness. And, Reader! amidst the perpetual fluctuating, dying, and perishing circumstances of ourselves, and all things around, what a grand bottom this is to rest upon, for time and eternity! Unchangeable in his nature, unchangeable in his purposes, unchangeable in all his covenant promises in Christ, to a thousand generations. Oh! for grace to keep it ever in remembrance, and to call to mind that this and this alone is the cause, why the seed of Jacob are not consumed.

7 ¶ Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

Oh! what a charge is here, after contemplating the unchangeable nature of our covenant God in Christ, as in the preceding verse to consider our sad departure from the Lord. Reader! do not confine this view to Israel of old, but look at Israel now. How are we gone away from the Lord, as a nation, as a people? Time was, when the blessed and holy doctrines of our holy faith were cherished in this nation, by all ranks and orders of the people. When the distinguishing truths of the Gospel, such as the everlasting covenant love of God the Father, the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of God the Son; and the quickening, converting, comforting influences of God the Holy Ghost, were heard, preached on, and received with joy and thankfulness, both by ministers and people. But how are we gone away? We may now take up the language of the Prophet, and say, *how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!* Lament. iv. 1. Oh! that He, who saith return unto me, would graciously accompany the invitation with his power, and cause the hearts of the people, as the heart of one man, to return to the Lord, that our land might again be called *Hephzibah*, and *Beulah*. Isaiah lxii. 4.

8 ¶ Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? in tithes and offerings.

9 Ye *are* cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation.

Reader! look at those charges spiritually, and then ask, in what doth the robbery of God now consist? Is it not in denying, or disbelieving his covenant relations, and word, and oath, and promises? Is it not in slighting God's dear Son, and setting up idols of self-righteousness in our own hearts? Is it not in thinking light of the Holy Ghost's work in the soul, as the sole means of conversion, and bringing the heart to God? Ponder over these things.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, If I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground: neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

Read these verses also spiritually, and ask what are the tythes the Lord hath respect to in what is here said? What can the Lord be requiring of his creatures, when we know that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof? What is it then? I humbly conceive the souls of the truly awakened, regenerated believers, bring in revenues of praise to the bountiful giver of all, when God's Christ is our Christ, and the Lord's Holy One, is our Holy One. When the poor sinner thus comes, and thus looks to the Lord, with an eye of faith to God's rich covenant mercy in Christ, there is then meat in God's house, for Christ himself is the living bread, and in Him, and by Him, the windows of heaven are opened, and blessings so profusely are poured out, that the gladdened heart finds more than his full bosom can hold. Then also the enemy is restrained; Satan is rebuked; ordinances are blessed; and the barrenness of the land is taken away! Oh! for such blessings as these on the nation, and ministers, and people!

13 ¶ Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD, yet ye say, What have we spoken *so much* against thee?

14 Ye have said, It *is* vain to serve God: and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

15 And now we call the proud happy: yea, they

that work wickedness are set up; yea, *they that tempt God* are even delivered.

16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another; and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.

I include the whole of these verses under one reading, in order to observe in them what the last verse expresseth, the discerning between the righteous and the wicked. And what can more strikingly set these things forth than what is here said. Here is the Lord's charge against all ungodly, carnal, careless, and Christless persons: What is their conduct, their language, their manners, their behaviour? The whole may be summed up in Job's account, *they say unto God*, that is, if not in word, yet what is the same thing indeed, *depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*. Reader! look into common life, and take with you the words of the man of Uz, as set forth in his book; compare the one with the other, and say how exact a representation he hath made. I beg the Reader to look at the whole passage. Job. xxi. from 7—15.—Now mark the contrast in the Lord's people, as set forth in this beautiful passage. *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another*. Of what do they speak? Of what do they think? for they are said also both to fear the Lord, and to think upon his name. Mark, I pray you, the several features by which they are here distinguished. And, oh! that the Reader and Writer, through grace, while marking the Lord's account of his people by such distinguishing tokens, may find they are our own. And first, they are said to *fear the Lord*. Yes! the Holy Ghost, by David, long since observed, that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*. Psalm cxi. 10. Such a fear, I apprehend, as includes the whole of vital godliness. And the effects that follow are then marked. *They thought upon his name*, that is, no doubt, God in his covenant love and faithfulness, as manifested in the person of his dear Son. For the name of God in scripture language, means the person, work, and offices of God, particularly as revealed in redemption. And thus being full in *thought* of the Lord in his grace, and love to his people; they *spake* of those things to one another; for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. And thus love was kindled, and communicated from one to another, by this heart-renewing, soul-comforting conversation. They spake not now and

then only, but *often* one to another. They helped each his fellow, when the glorious topics of redeeming love, in God the Father's covenant mercy in Christ, the person, grace, and loveliness of Jesus, his blood and righteousness, and the Spirit's work in the heart became the sweet subjects of discourse. And we are told, so pleasing are such things to the Lord, that, speaking after the manner of men, *he hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him.* Not that the Lord needs records, or makes any; or is listening to the words or actions of his creatures, by way of gaining information: *for all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.* Heb. iv. 13. But what is here said of the Lord's hearkening, means his approbation of his redeemed, thus speaking together of the great things of God. He draweth nigh to all such, in a way of grace, and manifests himself to them, otherwise than he doth to the world. See a beautiful proof of this, Luke xxiv. 13—32. John xiv. 22, 23. Psalm cxlv. 18, 19. But we must not stop here, in our review of this blessed passage. The Lord adds a promise, and a most comprehensive one it is. *And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.* The figure here made use of concerning the great day of God, is that of the world on fire, and Christ gathers his *Segullah*, his chosen ones, as jewels from the flame, as men would do by saving their valuables in such a time of destruction. And I pray the Reader to observe, how the Lord speaks of them. *They shall be mine.* The people of God are so from everlasting, in the gift of the Father, the purchase of Christ's blood, and the regenerating testimony in their hearts of the work of God the Holy Ghost. But in that day he publicly owns them before a congregated world of men and angels, and takes them to himself for ever. Oh! how eternally safe are all souls, in such securities! Oh! how gracious is the Lord, in the giving by the way such promises! Lord! give both Writer and Reader grace, to know our present interest in these sweet promises, and to live now in the enjoyment of them by faith, until we enter upon the everlasting possession of our inheritance by thy blood and righteousness in glory. Amen.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! behold in this Chapter the gracious goodness of the Lord, in promising to send his Herald, to prepare the way of the Lord! And mark the corresponding event with the prediction, in the account the Evangelist gives of the coming of John the Baptist. And think how every heart must have been big with expectation, and every eye on the look out in *Judea*, when the messenger came, announcing the approach of Jesus. And did not Jesus then come to his temple, at the time predicted? Did not the angel of the covenant appear, as had been foretold? Yes! but when he came to his own, we are told, his own received him not. Alas! what was there offensive in thy person, blessed Jesus, or in thy doctrine, that they rejected thee, O thou Lord of life and glory? Was it thy humble appearance, thou meek and lowly Lamb of God? Did they indeed despise thee for that, which above all things ought to have endeared thee to thy people? Reader! is the offence of the cross



ceased? Is not Jesus still *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence?* Oh! for the teachings of God the Holy Ghost, to make known among the people the glories of Christ!

But, Reader! whatever others do, may it be your happiness and mine, to welcome the Lord Christ to his temple. Come, thou Almighty Refiner and Purifier! come and melt down all the dross and spots of our corrupt nature. Do thou as with fuller's sope, by the gracious influences of thy blessed Spirit, take out the uncleanness within, and purify all thy kingdom of priests, as the sons of Levi. Keep my poor heart, dearest Jesus, by thy restraining and preventing grace, from going away from thine ordinances, that in thee, and thy perfect righteousness, my offering may go up, and find acceptance in the beloved. And, oh! thou blessed bountiful Lord of all, and Giver of all; open the windows of heaven upon thy Churches, thy Ministers, and thy People; and pour out such a plentiful effusion of blessings in grace, that every heart may be made glad, and refreshed in thine house of prayer. Let the public ministration of thy word be accompanied with such a visible display of thy presence, that all nations may know, that where thy Church is, there is a delightful land, and all shall call it blessed. And let the private communions of they that fear thee, be so sanctified with the holy conversation concerning Him that is always in their midst, that nothing but the name and sweet savor of Jesus may be known or heard among them. And do thou, dearest Lord, who art now hearkening, and hearing, and knowing all that passeth among thy people, and dost regard with peculiar tokens of thy favour, the affection of thy chosen; do thou remember all in that day, when thou comest to make up thy jewels; yea, Almighty Jesus! manifest then in full open display, as thou dost now in private testify by thy Spirit, whose are thine, and how dear they are to thee. Say of every one, in that solemn hour, when thou drawest the everlasting distinction between the righteous and the wicked, *these are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto them a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me. They shall eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

## CHAP. IV.

### CONTENTS.

*The Prophet in closing up his predictions to the Church, delivers a solemn message to the ungodly, and a gracious promise to the righteous. He declares the coming of Elijah before the last day of the Lord's coming.*

**F**OR, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all them that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

I cannot think with many, that this day spoken of, is the day of Christ's first coming in the flesh. Neither do I conceive, that all the events which took place in Jerusalem, after our Lord's return to glory, can be said to have had their fulfilment of this prophecy. I am much more inclined to refer this day, that is said *to burn as an oven*, to the same day the Apostles speak of. See 2 Peter iii. 7—12. Rev. xx. 11 to the end. Rev. xxi. 8.

2 ¶ But unto you that fear my name shall the Son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.

3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I shall do *this*, saith the LORD of hosts.

What a blessed account is here given of the Lord Jesus! under the figurative language of the sun, and the sun of righteousness, as the sole fountain of light, and life, and heat, and vivifying influence; Christ is described. And in how many ways, and by what a vast variety of means, the Lord Jesus becomes so to his people, it is impossible fully to describe. Jesus is all this, and infinitely more, from the first moment of conversion, through all the intermediate stages, until grace is consummated in glory. So that they all go forth under his blessed influence, and advance in the divine life with strength, and an assurance of firmness, as calves of the stall fattened and fed with constant attendance.

4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, *with* the statutes and judgments.

I humbly conceive, that this verse of reminding the people of the law of Moses, was to bring them under the condemning sentence of Moses's law. As the law was the ministration of death, for so the Apostle, commissioned by the Holy Ghost, was directed to call it, 2 Cor. iii. 7. this remembrance of it became very proper, and well timed, when Christ was approaching; intimating, that as the knowledge of sin came by the law, this might be made the school-master unto Christ. Rom. vii. 7. Galatians iii. 24.

5 ¶ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

I cannot but suppose that *Elijah*, and not John the Baptist, is intended here. I do not presume to say so much, but I venture to think it. *Malachi* had already declared the coming of John the Baptist, as the Lord's forerunner, in the days of his flesh; and therefore there needed no note of admiration, saying, behold! in speaking of him again. Moreover, the awful day of God here spoken of, as burning like an oven, should seem to refer more to the day of judgment than to the first coming of Christ, which is always called glad tidings of good and great joy to all people. And as at the resurrection of Christ many saints arose from the grave: Why may not Christ's second coming be so commemorated? Add to these, that as *Elijah* did not die the natural death of all men, but was carried up to heaven in a whirlwind, is it not possible, that when Christ returns to reign on earth, *Elijah* may be among those that shall reign with him? What the events of that reign upon earth may be, I presume not to say; but from the book of the Revelations, which describes in some measure the wonderful history, I can see no objection to the idea, that *Elijah* is here meant, and not John the Baptist. See Rev. xx. throughout. However, I beg the Reader to ponder well the subject, and look to God the Spirit for instruction in it. I only add on this Chapter, and indeed on the whole volume of the Old Testament together, that it is somewhat remarkable the close of it should be with the word *curse*, as the New Testament, in the word Gospel, implies in its very title at the opening, *blessing*. If, however, Reader, it meant to say, that out of Christ every thing is a curse, it is certainly as true as it is significant. And then it will equally follow, that in Christ every thing is a blessing, which is a glorious and incontestible truth. The Lord hath united both Testaments, that while in one we read our condemnation, in the other we may, through grace, discover our deliverance; and *as in Adam all die, in Christ all shall be made alive*. Amen and Amen.

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#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! pause over the solemn, the very solemn and awful account here given of the great and dreadful day of God, so often spoken of in scripture, and so certain and sure. Think how tremendous the judgments which will then overtake the ungodly. *For if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear*. Oh! what paleness, horror, and everlasting dismay, will then seize every Christless sinner, when appearing before the Judge of all the earth; without an Advocate to plead his cause, and void of all righteousness to justify his person.

Reader! what can I ask for you, or for myself, as a boon from a bountiful God in Christ, but that now, even now, while the day of grace continues, Jesus may arise as the sun of righteousness on our benighted souls, with healing in his wings. Be thou, dearest Lord, our light, our life, our righteousness, now, and for ever. Oh! be thou the one great source of our peace, who hast been the confidence and hope of thine Israel; and as thou hast been made a curse for thy people, so may they be made the righteousness of God in thee. Farewell *Malachi!* farewell till meeting together at this great day of God.

May it be the portion of both Writer and Reader to meet all the *Malachis'* and *Elijahs'* of our covenant God in that day, when Jesus shall come to make up his jewels, and amidst the host of Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, to praise God and the Lamb for ever and ever.

And now, Reader, as with this Part of my *Commentary*, I close the sacred volume of the Old Testament scripture, I beg once for all, and finally, and fully, that you will bend the knee in prayer as the author hath done before you, that the Lord will bless all that it contains, as far as it is agreeable to his holy and eternal truths, and pardon all that is amiss, which human weakness, ignorance, and infirmity, have given birth to, in this feeble endeavour to be helpful to the Lord's household. May that sin-bearing Lamb of God, that taketh away the iniquities of our most holy things, cleanse all that is here unholy and unclean. It is my intention, if the LORD favours such a design, to prosecute in the same plain and humble manner, the several Books of the New Testament, by way of *Commentary*. But this I leave, as I do all other events, bounded as they are within the limits of a life hastening now fast to a close, to Him who fixeth both the time and place of His people's habitation. In the mean season, I here set up my *Ebenezer* afresh. *Hitherto hath the Lord helped!* And concerning my further wishes to write the *Commentary* for the *New Testament*, as the LORD hath permitted me to finish one on the *Old*; if the gracious Master should say concerning this, as David remarked upon another occasion, *I have no delight in it*; with him I would submissively say, *Behold! here I am, let him do to me as seemeth him good* Amen.

PLYMOUTH, CHARLES VICARAGE,

On my birth-day, making 59 years of sin and vanity!

April 13, 1812.