

THE
PROPHET MICAH.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE Prophet *Micah* comes forward in the Church with no small eminency as a servant of the Lord, from several brilliant observations concerning his Lord and Master. None of the Prophets but *Micah* had the honor of telling the Church the very memorable and honoured spot where Christ should be born. Indeed we are highly indebted to him for many blessed testimonies concerning the LORD JESUS CHRIST, which we find like the spangled stars of the firmament, shining here and there in several parts of his prophecy.

The name of this Prophet is striking. *Micah* signifies poor and humble. He is called the *Morasthite*; perhaps from a city in the tribe of Judah called *Moresa*, or as some render it, *Mareshah*. He was nearly a cotemporary with *Isaiah*, and consequently lived in the reigns of *Jotham*, *Ahaz*, and *Hezekiah*, kings of *Judah*. Some have determined the extent of his ministry as a Prophet, to have been near fifty years; but it is more probable that it did not exceed forty years.

The Reader of this Commentary will be much more interested to find in *Micah's* prophecy the testimony to his inspired office, from his predictions concerning the LORD JESUS CHRIST, than any circumstantial account of the place of his birth, the connections in his family, or the period when he lived or died. I beg the Reader, therefore, to join my spirit at the mercy-seat, that so much light from heaven may shine in upon the sacred page of the writings of *Micah*, while we go over it, that we may both find precious testimonies to the truth as it is in JESUS: and find cause also to bless GOD the HOLY GHOST for this portion of his divine word, to make us wise unto salvation, through the faith that is in CHRIST JESUS. Amen.

CHAP. I.

CONTENTS.

The Prophet opens his commission with a very sorrowful tale. Israel and Judah are under the Lord's displeasure, and therefore Micah speaks of nothing but desolation.

THE word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite, in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

2 Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the LORD from his holy temple.

3 For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.

4 And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.

5 For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem?

6 Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.

7 And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.

8 Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go

stripped and naked. I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls.

9 For her wound *is* incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, *even* to Jerusalem.

There is a great sameness between the writings of *Isaiah* and *Micah*; their vision opens much alike, only *Micah's* vision is concerning *Samaría* and *Jerusalem*; and *Isaiah's* of *Judah* and *Jerusalem*. *Samaría* was the chief city of the ten tribes of Israel; so that between the two Prophets, both *Judah* and *Israel* are alike reprov'd. See *Isaiah* i. 1, 2. But what I wish chiefly from both is, to impress the Reader's mind with the one leading object of this and of all prophecy; namely, that the Lord is preparing the Church for the coming of Christ, by shewing the universal depravity of the human mind. The gracious way the Holy Ghost takes to bring to Christ is, by *convincing of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.* John xvi. 8.

10 ¶ Declare ye *it* not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust.

11 Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zanaan came not forth in the mourning of Beth-ezel; he shall receive of you his standing.

12 For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.

13 O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she *is* the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.

14 Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moresheth-gath: the houses of Achzib *shall be* a lie to the kings of Israel.

15 Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah: he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel.

16 Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

I do not trespass on the Reader with observations on what is here said; it is sufficient to remark, that the Prophet is speaking of the low estate of the Church, and he calls in the neighbouring nations as if to witness it. Gath is one of the chief cities of the Philistines. *Aphrah* means the land of dust, from its lowness and poverty. *Saphir*, though beautiful, shall know her shame; and *Zanaan*, which means a country of flocks, shall also be brought into trouble. The Prophet indeed refers to all the neighbouring nations; for when the Lord hath a controversy with his people, he will also reckon with the nations. Reader! it is blessed when the Lord goeth forth to judgment, to have the chambers of his covenant to run into. That is a sweet promise to this amount. Isaiah xxvi. 20, 21.

REFLECTIONS.

SOME may not easily discover the Lord Jesus in this scripture. But in the poverty and misery of our fallen nature, God the Holy Ghost is not unfrequently preaching Christ. For Reader! suffer me to ask, by what more persuasive and powerful means can the Lord Jesus be recommended to our hearts, than by shewing us our misery and ruin out of Christ? When you and I are taught feelingly and experimentally what sin is; and that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing; surely it must endear Christ, and induce a sense of our want of him. Oh! how much will a soul long for Jesus, when led to see that without him we are lost for ever. Hence the Prophet's vision is not confined to *Samaria* and *Jerusalem*; all people, yea, all the earth are called upon to the charge. The Lord grant, Reader, that you and I, in the Prophet's call, may feel interested, so as to impress the necessity and suitableness of the Lord Jesus, and that the HOLY GHOST may bring him home to our hearts, and form him there, *the hope of glory!*

CHAP. II.

CONTENTS.

The Chapter opens with the same melancholy relation as the former. But several sweet views of Christ arise here and there as we prosecute the contents; and in the close we have a lovely manifestation of the Redeemer under one of his divine offices.

WOE to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.

2 And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take *them* away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.

We have here the continuance of the same subject; the Lord's charge against *Israel*. It is not the nations around, but *Israel*, against whom the Lord pleads. Sin in God's people becomes exceeding sinful.

3 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time *is* evil.

4 ¶ In that day shall *one* take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and *say*, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed *it* from me! turning away he hath divided our fields.

5 Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD.

6 Prophesy ye not, *say they to them that prophesy*: they shall not prophesy to them, *that they shall not take shame*.

When we consider the Lord's dealings with *Israel*, we cannot sufficiently lament their depravity. Other nations of the earth, which knew not the Lord, we behold with a different aspect to that of the seed of Jacob. A blessed, so fed, so taught, and so protected! What apology can be made for their apostacy! surely every beholder must be astonished!

7 ¶ O *thou that art* named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? *are* these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

8 Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war.

9 The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.

Do not forget, Reader, nor overlook the sweet feature of grace here appearing. Though unworthy, degenerate, and fallen, still Jacob is reminded of his name, and called upon to recollect, that Him with whom is the residue of the Spirit, is not straitened, limited, or confined.

Reader! I have found this thought precious under all heart-straitenings in prayer; the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. Jesus still lives, still appears as a Lamb slain in the midst of the throne, and ever acts as the Intercessor of his people!

10 Arise ye, and depart; for this *is not your* rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy *you*, even with a sore destruction.

I would read this verse by itself, because I humbly conceive, that it is not connected with what went before, neither in what follows. And moreover, I think it is a blessed verse, suitable to be read with every Chapter in the Old Testament and the New. Is it not indeed the call of God the Spirit to every awakened soul, to come up out of all the unsatisfying things around, and to behold them as they all are, in reality proposing nothing to satisfy the desires, or to answer the expectations of an immortal soul. All, all is polluted. Doth the Reader ask; and what is not? I will beg to answer him by sending him to his Bible, in a few passages, for they will lead to others; and I love to send all serious inquiring souls to the fountain head in the word of God. See Isaiah xxviii. 12. Psalm cxvi. 7. Matt. xi. 28, 29, 30.

11 If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, *saying*, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

Here is a very awful scripture. The Lord alone knows in how many instances it may be daily fulfilling. Alas! when false teachers are given to a people of a deluded mind, what a state must that people be in!

12 ¶ I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee: I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of *the multitude of men*.

Remark, Reader, in the worst of times, how the Lord is richly giving out sweet promises concerning the Lord Jesus Christ to his people. For to whom is the gathering of the people to be, but to the Lord Jesus Christ? And observe the expression, *all of Jacob*; not an hoof, as Moses told Pharaoh, should be left behind. Exod. x. 26. *Bozrah* was a place remarkable for cattle. And therefore under this figure is shewn what a multitude of Israel shall be assembled. Sweet thought! Christ's fold is many. *John* saw in his day, already in glory, *a multitude which no man could number*. And who shall say what a vast accession since? Rev. vii. 9.

13 The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.

Here is a verse concerning the Lord Jesus, which it would take the whole of life to go over every part and explain; and after all, numberless beauties pointing to the Lord Jesus in it would be left unexplored and unknown. That by the *breaker* is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, the general consent of all commentators have agreed. The name seems to be taken from *Pharez*, meaning a breach. See Gen. xxxviii. 29. And Christ is come up in the everlasting counsel of Jehovah, in his glorious Mediatorial character, as a *Repairer of the breach of his people*. Isa. lviii. 12. And in this view it is most blessed to behold Christ, and to remark how he corresponds in every point to this character. He indeed came up before his people, when he arose at the call of Jehovah, in the infinite mind, as the Holy One of Israel, the Maker, and Redeemer thereof. And as in the eternal counsels he thus appeared the glorious Head and Representative of his body the Church; so in time his goings were for the salvation of his people. Micah v. 2. Habak. iii. 13. Through the whole of the scripture history before his incarnation; who but Jesus came up as the sum and substance of every type, shadow, and figure; both before the law, and under the law, and the Prophets? And when at his miraculous conception, birth, and ministry, death and resurrection; he manifested himself under each, and every particular, as the Lord our righteousness; who but Jesus came up, and went before his people in all the glorious offices which testified to his character? And who but Jesus broke asunder the bars and gates of death, when he arose from the dead, and conquered the grave in its own territories, for his people? Who but Jesus broke up the clouds, when in his ascension he returned to take possession of the kingdom of heaven, for his people? And who but Jesus is it that now goeth before his redeemed in every act of grace, and enables them in his power to break up and break through every difficulty that would impede their way to glory; and as this blessed scripture saith, are passed through the gate, and are gone out by it? We hail thee, O thou Almighty Breaker! thou art indeed all this and infinitely more to thy people; for thou art *the Lord our righteousness!*

REFLECTIONS.

READER! from the perusal of this truly gospel Chapter, behold the gracious provision made for you, for me, for all that are of the house of Jacob, spiritually considered; the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, neither the power of the Almighty Breaker diminished! Every thing around us, in us, and about us, join the Prophet's cry; *arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest because it is polluted*. Surely then we must desire a better country, that is an heavenly. And blessed be our God, there is not only prepared for us a better country, but JESUS,

our Almighty Breaker, hath broken up, and gone before, and taken possession of it in our name, that as he is there, we may be also. Precious Lord Jesus, we pray thee break through for thy people all that would oppose our following thee! Break for us all the chains of sin, all the devices of Satan, and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And do thou, Almighty Lord, break in us all the remaining power of indwelling corruption, and open our prison frames, and prison doors, and bring us out into the glorious liberty wherewith thou makest thy people free. Then shall we, in thy strength, trample over all the power of the enemy, and be made more than conquerors through thy grace helping us. Yea, we shall then pass through the gate, and go out by it; Jesus *our king is before us, and our Lord on our head.*

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

This Chapter is much in the strain of the general tenor of the Prophets, full of reproof mingled with gracious promises. Through the whole of the Chapter we find much of the love of God, even in the midst of threatened judgment.

AND I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; *Is it not for you to know judgment?*

2 Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones.

3 Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.

4 Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

5 ¶ Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

It must have been a sad day with the Church, and indeed the history of those times proves it was, when it was as with the priest, so with the people. A state of general corruption prevailed. *Isaiah the cotemporary of Micah, hath described it. Chap. xxiv. 1—12.*

6 Therefore night *shall be* unto you, that ye shall not have a vision : and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine ; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.

7 Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded ; yea, they shall all cover their lips ; for *there is* no answer of God.

But here we have the most awful account, when the ministers of God, or the pretenders to that ministry, are given up to a deluded mind. While the Lord keeps his sanctuary pure, and the streams unpolluted, there is hope that the minds of the people may through grace, drink of those fountains of life and salvation in the sacred word : But if those who minister in divine things, are themselves given up to strong delusions ; what must the end be to the common people ? Reader ! look into what is said by the Apostle concerning the last days, and then consider how near the present hour is approaching them. 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

8 ¶ But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

What a blessed verse is this ! And what a gracious relief from the awful account which went before. Who that reads it, but must feel constrained to cry out, Lord ! give to thy Church and people, pastors after thine own mind, and full of the Spirit of the Lord. Jeremiah iii. 15.

9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.

10 They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.

11 The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money : yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, *Is* not the LORD among us ? none evil can come upon us.

12 Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high-places of the forest.

The Chapter closeth as it opened, full of judgment; but all preparatory to mercy, as the following Chapter declares. Indeed we ought to read both together, that we might do as the Psalmist did, when he sang both of *judgment and mercy*. The Holy Ghost in his divine office convinces of sin, and convinceth of Christ's righteousness. Psalm ci. 1. John xvi. 8—11.

REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED Lord! we thank thee, that amidst all our unworthiness and departures, like Israel, thou hast not withdrawn our sabbaths, nor made the sun to go down upon our Prophets. Still there is in our midst, the blessed word of thy Gospel, the means of grace, and the cry proclaimed every returning Lord's day; *he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches!* And though in the present hour Zion is plowed as a field, and the mountain of the Lord's house lieth low; yet thou hast said that thou wilt visit thy people in the latter day, and gather them together as the sheep of *Bozrah*. Do, Lord, as thou hast said: and hasten the auspicious hour, when *a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation*; for thou hast said, *I the Lord will hasten it in his time.*

C H A P. IV.

CONTENTS.

Here is a Chapter which looks into Gospel days, and is indeed full of blessed promises concerning the Messiah's kingdom, from beginning to end.

BUT in the last days it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

3 ¶ And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up

sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make *them* afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken *it*.

5 For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

So very important in the eye of God the Holy Ghost, is this blessed prophecy, that he thought proper to commission two of his servants the Prophets to deliver it to the Church, and almost in the very same words. If the Reader will look back to the second Chapter of *Isaiah's* writings, he will find the same there delivered to the Church, as the Prophet *Micah* hath in this Chapter. And is not this as if to say, *in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established?* 2 Cor. xiii. 1. Reader! do mark the several features here set forth, of the blessings of Jesus and his gospel. His Church shall be established in spite of hell and the world. All nations shall flow to it. Every redeemed soul shall invite his neighbour. The enemies of the Church, the Lord will judge. Peace shall be established in the earth, and the Church shall enjoy uninterrupted quiet. Who that hears this, but must join in the ardent prayer of the Church; *Lord! thy kingdom come!*

6 In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted.

7 And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever.

Here are sweet promises also to the weak and fearful. Halting, and the trembling souls, under the thoughts of being cast off, shall be strengthened. Jesus will be their strength, and their confidence, and will plead their cause. Observe, Reader, how often that sweet word *I* is mentioned. I the Lord will assemble; I will gather; I will make her that halted a remnant. Yes! all must be done by the LORD. And when the LORD works, who will let or hinder?

8 ¶ And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

9 Now why dost thou cry out aloud? *is there* no king in thee? *is thy* counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.

10 Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go *even* to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.

If, as some have supposed, that the word *Migdol-Eder*, which we translate Tower, means *Bethlehem*, and the very place where the Jewish shepherds were keeping their flocks by night, when the angels announced to them the birth of Christ. Luke ii. 8, 9. there is an uncommon beauty in this passage in reference to Christ. Certain it is that the Church is Christ's flock, and Christ himself as a tower of defence, See Zech. ix. 12. and Ezek. xxxiv. 31. And it may be truly said, that Christ's kingdom began from thence, when Christ was born in Bethlehem king of the Jews. Matt. ii. 2. Here also, in the travailing pains spoken of, is an allusion to the Church's first going into *Babylon*, and from thence being delivered.

11 ¶ Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.

12 But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into his floor.

The Church is and ever must be, upon earth, the envy of the carnal world. But, Reader, what a sweet thought it is for you, for me, for all, that when the enemies of Christ and his redeemed seem to triumph, their boasting is but momentary, and the Lord is thereby hastening their destruction. This was memorably fulfilled in the Church's persecution in *Babylon*; for when the impious monarch insulted the people, and profaned the holy vessels of the sanctuary, the same night he was slain. Dan. v. 2—30.

13 Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the LORD of the whole earth.

See, Reader, see! what holy triumphs await the Church in the end. It is not enough that Jesus will drive out all the enemies of his people *before* them; but he will bring all their enemies *under* them. Satan shall not only be bruised, but bruised under the feet of the poor timid followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The song hath been already sung in heaven, in the assurance of those events; and ere long, the same song shall be sung by all the redeemed upon earth. *Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night; and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.* Rev. xii. 10, 11.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! do not dismiss this precious Chapter, until you have again and again pondered well the contents of it. Think at what distance this blessed prophecy was delivered. Behold the fulfilment of it in the coming of the Lord Jesus. See what positive assurances are given for its complete accomplishment. Then consider the days in which you live; upon whom the ends of the world are come; and then in fervent earnest prayer, get into the very retirings of the Lord, and give him no rest nor peace until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Oh! that the cause of Jesus was more generally and warmly taken up, by those who call themselves his people! Oh! that men were less selfish, and instead of seeking their own, would seek the things of Jesus Christ. Reader! let you and I beg of God to give us grace to prefer Jerusalem's interest above our chief joy. Lord! I would say, *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion!* Hasten the blessed hour, when thou wilt establish thine house upon the tops of the mountains, and cause all nations to flow unto it. Lord! *cause the law of the glorious gospel to go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem!* Amen.

CHAP. V.

CONTENTS.

This is a most blessed Chapter, for the precious contents of which the Church of Christ hath found occasion in all ages since possessed of it, and will find occasion to bless GOD the HOLY GHOST for it till time shall be no more. We have in it the memorable spot predicted where Christ should be born; with assurances of his spiritual government and kingdom, and the gracious marks by which his spiritual Israel should be known!

NOW gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

The Chapter is introduced with an account of *Zion's* troubles. She is to be brought down to great affliction. Troops of foes are to encompass her. No doubt this looked further than the captivity of the Church in *Babylon*, because the next verse is a comfortable promise in the midst of this trouble; and as it refers to the person, and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am inclined to think that the troops here spoken of mean the *Roman* government; under which *Judea* was a province in the moment of the birth of Christ. See, Reader! how when troubles abound, consolations abound!

2 But thou Beth-lehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.

Every word in this blessed verse is important; and therefore let us regard every word in it. *Bethlehem* means the house of bread! how suited this to him, and his birth, who is *the bread of life*. *Ephratah*, or *Ephrath*, meaning *fruitfulness*, was the name also of the city of *Bethlehem*, about two leagues from *Jerusalem*, supposed to have been so named from *Ephrah*, Caleb's wife; 1 Chron. ii. 19. *David* was also born here. John vii. 42. Observe also, how humbly it is spoken of, *little among the thousands of Judah*. Yes! where Jesus the humble Saviour is born, all the corresponding circumstances shall be humble also! Now mark the features of the God-man, also Mediator. *His goings forth have been from of old*. How? not as God *only*, for then in that sense there is neither goings forth nor retirings. His immensity filling all space, is one of his divine attributes, and could not need mentioning. And not as man *only*, for then his goings forth could not have been eternal. But in the union of both, as God-man, Jesus-Mediator went forth in the decree of Jehovah from everlasting. Sweet and precious testimony this to the character of the Lord Jesus, as the Christ of God. His character of office is next to be noted, *a Ruler in Israel*. And so the Lord Jesus was amidst all the humbleness in which he appeared in the days of his flesh; for though he was despised and rejected of men, yet did he reign and rule in the hearts of all his redeemed, and *manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him*. John ii. 11. Blessed be God the Holy Ghost for this precious portion in the testimony of the Prophets, to the person, character, and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ! In confirmation of the whole, let the Reader consult, Matt. ii. 6. There is one sweet thought more in this verse which must not be overlooked, because it is highly important; and that is, who is the speaker of this memorable verse? Doubtless it is God the Father. Well then, Reader! see here a blessed testimony of God the Father, to the mission of his dear Son; that this Ruler, this Saviour in Israel, whose goings forth had been from everlasting, had been and should be, *unto God*: he shall come forth *unto me*, saith Jehovah. Here lies indeed the great blessedness in the commission of Christ, that it is the authority of God the Father. So spake Jesus. John v. 36—43. So spake his servant John! 1 John iv. 14.

3 Therefore will he give them up, until the time *that* she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

The sense of this verse seems to be, that there shall be great trouble in Israel, until this glorious event of Christ's birth should take place. And certain it is that Israel was brought very low before Christ was born. Some however make these words wholly spiritual with respect to the new birth, in the heart of Christ's people, whose awakenings in grace are well known to be called in scripture *travailing in soul*. Gal. iv. 19.

4 ¶ And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

It is very easy to enter into a proper apprehension of what is here meant concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. His person being before proved, we may well suppose the Prophet is speaking of his offices. *Feeding*, comprehends the whole office of a shepherd; restoring, healing, leading, protecting, and the like. In this sense, Christ's *kingly* office, as well as his *prophetical*, and *priestly*, are plainly included. And as it takes in the whole of Christ's character, so it extends to the ends of the earth. Such was indeed, and is, and ever will be the dominion of the Lord Jesus. Psal. lxxii. 8—17.

5 And this *man* shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men.

6 And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver *us* from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.

Wherefore the translators of our Bible into English, put in the word *man* into the first of these verses, I know not, for certain it is they had no authority to do so, not being in the original. But we have no objection to the insertion of it, if by the expression they mean the God-man, the glory-man, spoken of before, whose goings forth had been from everlasting. For sure it is, the Prophet could mean no other. Christ alone is our peace, and hath made our peace in the blood of his cross. And he, and he alone, is this peace against every *Assyrian*, that is, every enemy from without, or from within. *Seven*

shepherds, and *eight* principal men, it should seem had respect to some of the more eminent servants of the Lord, probably the apostles, or evangelists, or both. The number of *seven*, and *eight*, doth not I apprehend mean a specific, but a certain number mentioned for an uncertain.

7 And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

This is a very lovely description of the people of God. They are called a *remnant*. So they are in the Gospel; and a *little flock*. Rom. ix. 27. taken from Isa. x. 21, 22. Luke xii. 32. They are promised to be distinguished from the world around them by divine blessings, as the fleece of *Gideon*, from the dry earth. Judges vi. 36, 37, 38. But how beautiful the figure. They are to be as the dew, and from the Lord. And what is this? and how is it known? The Lord hath said by Hosea, *I will be as the dew unto Israel*. Hosea xiv. 5. First observe, it is all of the Lord, *not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord*. Zech. 4—6. Now as the dew is from the Lord, so are the remnant of Jacob. They are born, saith John, *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God*. John i. 13. Moreover, this remnant, though known and distinguished as the dew when fallen, yet what eye sees the dew fall? who observes the method of its coming? Precisely so by Jacob's remnant. The work of God the Holy Ghost upon the soul is unknown in the time of his operation, unnoticed, unperceived by the world; yea, the very receiver is for a while a stranger to the Lord's work within him. Still further in reference to this beautiful allusion; as the dew comes down in abundance on the earth, so the grace of God the Spirit comes down most plentifully on the soul. The promise to the Lord Jesus was, that *from the womb of the morning he should have the dew of his youth*. Psalm cx. 3. Multitudes of souls should be given to Christ, as incalculable as the dew-drops of the morning. And as the dew is like the crystal, clear, pellucid, and shining; so the remnant of Jacob should be amidst the unclean and clouded around. Hence David's song concerning Jesus, the Rock of Israel, and his people in him. 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. And not only dew, but showers; not only a few here and there, like the droppings of rain, but multitudes, like the plentiful outpouring of the clouds, that refresheth the whole earth with their copiousness. And what endears the whole, and recommends the whole to shew the sovereignty of grace, and the good pleasure of the Lord in bestowing all these mercies; this remnant of Jacob shall be so blessed, not only before they ask for the blessing, or are deserving of it, but before they have any consciousness of the blessing itself, or their want of it; for it *tarrieth not for man, neither waiteth for the sons of men*. Reader! I do beseech you, pause over this rich verse, and read it again and again. And then may we both fall down before the mercy seat, and freely, fully give all the glory of rich, free, and sovereign grace, where alone it is due, crying out with the Apostle, *now thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift*. 2 Cor. ix. 15.

8 ¶ And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.

The same distinguishing blessings on Jacob's remnant, only adopting another figure, are here promised, to shew the freedom of God's grace and love to his people. In the former Jacob's remnant is made *passive* in receiving blessings from the Lord, to denote the Lord's chosen. In this they are shewn to be *active*, in going forth in the Lord's strength, to the Lord's cause. Acting under the name and authority of the lion of the tribe of Judah; *the worm Jacob is enabled to thresh the mountains.* Isaiah xli. 14.

9 Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.

Is not this spoken of Christ himself? I do not presume to answer the question. But if it be, it is a blessed promise. And if not, it is still blessed to Christ's people, for it must be to them in him?

10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots:

11 And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds:

12 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no *more* soothsayers:

13 Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands.

14 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities.

15 And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

I include all these verses under one reading. They all, according to my view, proclaim the same doctrine, namely, the Lord's promise that the remnant of Jacob shall be defended, blessed, and protected, by Jacob's Lord. They shall be stripped of all false confidences in themselves, and secured from all deceitful errors from others. The Lord undertakes for them, and will in one and the same moment keep them from all spiritual pride, and beat down all their spiritual foes.

Precious promises of a more precious, protmising, and performing God! Reader! what can be more blessed, than when the Lord engageth for himself, and engageth for his people. Do turn to that sweet scripture of the Prophet before you close your review of this Chapter. Jeremiah xxxii. 37—41.

REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED Lord Jesus! I would leave all other subjects, all other considerations, to follow thee thou Lamb of God, wherever I find thee in thy scriptures of truth. And as here in this Chapter thou didst commission thy servant *Micah* to tell the Church, ages before thine incarnation, where thou wouldest be born; at *Bethlehem Ephratah* would my soul meditate the mysterious birth of Him, whose name was, and is, and ever will be, Wonderful! Take wing, my soul, this morning, and fly to the honored spot. A greater light than the ministry of a star, which guided the wise men, will guide thee; for Jesus himself, by his blessed Spirit, will go before, and pointing to the place, will say, as in his own blessed words, *this man was born here!* But, oh! Almighty Jesus! even when in sweet meditation at *Bethlehem*, shall I not in devout thought run back into the contemplation of eternity, and call to mind that *thy goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* Indeed, indeed, my honored Lord, it was before all worlds that thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for their salvation wert thou then the anointed. So that all thou hast done afterwards in time, and all that thou art unceasingly engaged in now in eternity, and will be for ever and ever, is on the same blessed design, for the glory of thy Father, in the redemption of his and thy chosen. Hail! thou Almighty God! Hail! thou Wonderful Man. Thou art, and wilt be, the peace of all thy redeemed, when the whole troops of *Assyrians*, even the whole host of the Church's enemies, shall come into our land. Thou wilt stand and feed thy flock in the strength of Jehovah, in the presence of their foes, and make their cup run over! And thy remnant shall be in the midst of many people, as a dew, so numerous, so beautiful, so refreshed and comely, from thy comeliness put upon them. And all this, yea, and more than eye hath seen, or ear heard, or the mind can think, wholly from thyself, and to thyself, and thine own glory; not waiting their cry, or their deservings, but like the sweet influences of heaven in the falling showers, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. Lord! be thou thus according to thy promise, as the dew unto all thine Israel. Amen.

CHAP. VI.

CONTENTS.

This is a beautiful Chapter, inasmuch as it sets forth the graciousness of the Lord in his expostulations with Israel.

HEAR ye now what the LORD saith, Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.

2 Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.

This seems a new Sermon of the Prophet's, opening at this Chapter. The stile is as usual in the prophetic way. Not only the people are called upon, but the inanimate part of the creation, to be witness of Israel's stupidity. See Isaiah i. 2, &c.

3 O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

5 O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.

I beg the Reader particularly to notice in the very commencement of the Lord's discourse, that the covenant relation between the Lord and his Israel is kept in remembrance. *O my people!* do not, I beg you, forget this, for it is most gracious and most blessed. Of all the parts of scripture, these are certainly what come home most powerfully to the heart; the Lord's appeal to his people concerning his unalterable goodness, and their continued rebellion. *Jeremiah's* prophecy is full of this. See Chap. ii. In a short compass the Lord here sums up the outlines of the whole eventful history of his grace over Israel, in bringing them out of Egypt, and bringing them through the wilderness. And in the last of these verses the Lord as briefly sums up the blessings he had manifested to them, when bringing them into the promised land, and his special mercy in the case of *Balaam* and *Barak*, on the borders of it. Numbers 22, 23, 24.

and 25 Chapters. But I beg more particularly the Reader to observe with me, what the Lord here saith was his gracious design in all this; that *ye may know the righteousness of the Lord*; or, as it might be read, the *righteousnesses* of the Lord; for this doth not consist in one, or two, or ten thousand acts, but it is in all acts. The Hebrews delight in plurals in this way. So in the first Psalm, the word is *blessedness* is the man, that is the Man Christ Jesus. Meaning that he, and he alone, is blessedness, for there is blessing in no other. See Psalm i. 1. and Psalm lxxii. 17. I must observe once more on this part of the Prophet's verse, in the reason assigned that *ye may know the righteousness of the Lord*; that the *Syriac* version applies this to the enemies of Israel, that *they might know*, that is *Balak*, and *Balaam*, and the rest of the reprobate crew, might know the righteousness of the God of Israel. And if read thus, it is equally beautiful. It is as if the Lord had said, that they shall know my love to my people, and my justice in punishing the malice of their unprovoked foes.

6 ¶ Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high GOD? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old?

7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

This is that memorable passage in scripture which hath given rise to numberless opinions, both in the moral and religious world, and by the perversion of it, untaught by God the Holy Ghost, hath produced endless disputes among the carnal and worldly minded in all ages. I beg the Reader's indulgence on this account, to be somewhat more particular upon it than I otherwise should have done; and when I have finished, I shall leave the whole before him that he may form his own judgment; begging of him first, as I now do, to seek the light and instruction of that Almighty Spirit which is promised, and whose office it is *to guide into all truth!* And first I should observe, that some have thought that the enquiry, *wherewith shall I come before the Lord*, and the proposal of *burnt offerings*, and the like, is not from Israel, but from *Balak*. They that are of this opinion, conceive, that before *Balak* and *Balaam* parted, the former put such questions as in these verses, and *Balaam* gave the answer as in the eighth verse. And the reason such writers have assigned, is, that Israel never could be so ignorant as to ask, whether they should offer human sacrifices, as in the gift of their first born for the sin of their soul. But I confess that this kind of reasoning doth not appear satisfactory to me. We

know that in the case of Israel, at the very time of *Balaam's* hiring himself to curse the people of God, that by the advice of that infamous enchanter, *Moab* got Israel, by means of their daughters, to join the *Moabites* in their sacrifices. See Numbers xxv. 1, 2, 3. Compared with Rev. ii. 14. I cannot but think therefore, that the enquiry is not *Balak*, but *Israel*. And I humbly conceive that it corresponds to the anxious enquiry of every soul, when first brought under the awakening distress of his own heart concerning sin, and before God the Holy Ghost hath brought him savingly acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ. Reader! let us accept the inquiry in this light; and now attend to the answer. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* that is, say some, in every department of life to do the just, the honest, the upright part; to be merciful according to a man's ability, in acts of alms-giving, and the like; and to observe an humble reverence towards God. This, say they, is the sum and substance of all moral and religious obligations. But I bless God, that *I have not so learned Christ*. For on this presumption, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ would be inverted, and instead of making the love of God the *first*, and grand concern; and causing the *second*, which is the love of our neighbour, to arise out of it; the love of men in this sense would become the first, and the love of God the last, and least. And did men attend to the plain sense of scripture, and not the presumptuous reasoning of their own minds, they would discover that those acts here spoken of, in doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly, are expressly said to be *with God*, that is, with an eye to Him, and serving Him in all. And if we thus accept this memorable passage of scripture, and explain it under the terms of the Gospel, the sense of it will be as plain and obvious as need be. Reader! you and I shall indeed *do justly with our God*, if we confess that in ourselves, by reason of sin, we justly deserve his wrath and indignation, having broken all his righteous laws. We shall indeed *love mercy*, if the Lord Jesus Christ be the mercy we love, who is himself *the mercy promised*; (Luke i. 72.) and in his own person, blood, and righteousness, comprehends the whole of mercy and salvation. And we shall indeed *walk humbly with our God*, while from a daily sense of sin, and from feeling the workings of corruption within, we walk as those, who in the moment they seek mercy, constantly acknowledge their total undeservings of it. This is indeed to walk humbly with our God, when we make a free and full confession of all sin, and subscribe as fully and freely to the rights of God's justice. It is called in scripture, *accepting the punishment of our iniquity*. See Levit. xxvi. 40, 41. And it is also said to be *justifying the divine government*, in condemning ourselves. So did David. Psalm li. 4. If, to the anxious inquiry in this memorable passage, we thus interpret scripture, according to the teaching of God the Holy Ghost. See John xvi. 8—11. And under the humblings of the soul we do the first act of justice to the first of Beings, in acknowledging ourselves to be virtually nothing but sin; and in the consciousness of this most unquestionable truth, we so love mercy, as to accept on our bended knees in transports of rejoicing, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as the whole of our salvation; then will follow all the blessed effects in walking humbly with God, and in

love, justice, and charity with men. But to suppose that this blessed passage of scripture refers only, or even principally to the *second* branch of duties, while overlooking, or only slightly regarding the *first*, is, according to my views of the word of God, sadly perverting the whole purport of scripture. May the Lord be the teacher of him that writes, and him that reads, that to both may be given a right understanding in all things. Amen.

9 The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and *the man of* wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.

God's voice is his word, his ordinances, his providences, his mercies, his judgments. And the man of wisdom will see and regard it. In the margin of our old Bibles, the words are, *thy name shall see that which is*, that is, by the name is meant person; the Lord shall see. Thus the Lord saith, *thou hast a few names in Sardis*; that is, thou hast a few persons there. Rev. iii. 4. And speaking of Christ, it is said, *in his name shall the Gentiles trust*; that is, in Christ shall they trust. Matt. xii. 21. *Hear the rod*, is an uncommon expression. One might have expected it would have been said to *feel* it. But God's rods differ from the rods of men. His rods speak as well as correct; for the sinner is made to connect with the punishment the sin which brings it.

10 ¶ Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure *that is* abominable.

11 Shall I count *them* pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?

12 For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue *is* deceitful in their mouth.

13 Therefore also will I make *thee* sick in smiting thee, in making *thee* desolate because of thy sins.

14 Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down *shall be* in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and *that* which thou deliveredst will I give up to the sword.

15 Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.

16 ¶ For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

These expressions are all directed to one and the same end, namely, to teach Israel the enormity of his transgressions. *Omri* was a king in Israel, and so was *Ahab*, his son; both transgressors before the Lord, and yet their statutes were obeyed. How awful was it in Israel therefore to forget the Lord! 1 Kings xvi. 23—33.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! what are all the controversies the Lord hath with his people, but on account of their transgression and sin? And how gracious must it be in God, still to bear with his people, and not cast them off as their iniquities deserve! And may it not be said, as in this Chapter, so in all ages of the Church, was there ever mercy like that which the Lord hath manifested to his Church? How tenderly doth the Lord call upon the people to become witnesses against themselves, and to his grace and kindness towards them? How did the Lord then, and how doth the Lord now, guard and fence his redeemed from all the *Balaams* and *Balaks* that would destroy them. And what doth the Lord require in return? Surely nothing but what common policy and common honesty would direct, even if thankfulness to the Lord was out of the question. Can we shew justice to men, if we keep back and withhold justice to God? Convinced as we must be, that thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil, can be no acceptable service to the Lord; shall we not delight to offer that which is? And if infinite love, and infinite grace hath provided a full ransom for sin in the blood of Christ, shall we not in justice confess, that without it we are lost for ever? If Jehovah hath set forth Jesus as the first born in the womb of mercy, yea, mercy itself in all the fulness of it, shall we not love Jesus for his great salvation, and God the Father for giving it? And if all that is required of a poor sinner, that is so poor and insolvent that he hath nothing to bring, is, to do this justice, and love this Jesus, and to walk thus humbly with his God; can there be terms more gracious, more blessed, and condescending? Lord! give both to Reader and Writer this grace, that we may hear the Lord's voice thus crying to the city, and under divine wisdom see thy name, and rejoice in thy salvation. Amen.

CHAP. VII.

CONTENTS.

The Prophet laments his solitary situation as a child of God. He takes comfort in the view of his rich consolation in the Lord. He closeth the Chapter in words of admiration at the free and gracious mercy of God, in Covenant love.

WOE is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: *there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit.*

2 The good *man* is perished out of the earth: and *there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.*

3 ¶ That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge *asketh* for a reward; and the great *man*, he uttereth his mischievous desire; so they wrapt it up.

4 The best of them *is a brier: the most upright is sharper* than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen *and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity.*

Here is a sad complaint of the Prophet concerning the times in which he lived. Like another *Elijah*, he was inclined to think that faith was lost in the earth. 1 Kings xix. 10. He compares his state to that of a gleaner of the vineyard. Isaiah xxviii. 4. The several images he makes use of are very striking.

5 ¶ Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.

6 For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies *are* the men of his own house.

These are strong expressions, and if taken spiritually, are very much to the purpose. What hath any man to trust in, but Jesus and his great salvation?

7 Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

There is an uncommon degree of beauty as well as godliness in what the Prophet here saith. And it is truly blessed, when from the little dependence that we can find in men, we look unto the Lord. Oh! what a happy frame is that man in, who can thus from the heart address the Lord! And how blessed is that disappointment, trouble, sorrow, or whatever affliction it may be, that compels the heart to leave every thing to the Lord!

8 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD *shall be* a light unto me.

9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, *and* I shall behold his righteousness.

10 Then *she that is* mine enemy shall see *it*, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eye shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

11 *In* the day that thy walls are to be built, *in* that day shall the decree be far removed.

12 *In* that day *also* he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and *from* the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and *from* mountain to mountain.

13 Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate, because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

Reader! it is truly blessed when a child of God can thus look at every foe and triumph in Christ. Times of darkness are times for faith to be in lively exercise. It is of no real consequence in what state of exercise a believer is placed in, if faith be in action. His safety is always one and the same. And dark seasons are equally favourable with bright seasons, in respect of his everlasting security. His comfort may vary; but his security cannot. And therefore dark seasons afford only a better opportunity for the triumphs of faith; because then it is the soul finds special comfort in Jesus, when all creature comforts cease to satisfy.

14 Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily *in* the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed *in* Bashan Gilead, as in the days of old.

15 According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous *things*.

16 The nations shall see, and be confounded, at all their might: they shall lay *their* hand upon *their* mouth, their ears shall be deaf.

17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee.

Here seems to be a call to the great shepherd of Israel to regard his fold, and that with peculiar manifestations of favour, because they are dwelling in solitary places. Perhaps void of ordinances, and the enjoyment of their sabbaths. Reader! a child of God hath peculiar claims upon God, when outward circumstances are unfavourable. I admire the conduct of the Patriarch Jacob in a situation of this kind. And I admire yet more the grace of Jacob's God, which afforded an occasion for the exercise of such lively faith. If the Reader will consult the passage in the Patriarch's history, he will perhaps think with me, how blessed was Jacob in being brought to such a trial, and grace given him to make use of it. And how very gracious was the Lord, who both brought him into the exercise, and gave him suited strength and wisdom to carry him through it. See Gen. xxxii. 7—12.

18 Who *is* a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy.

19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

20 Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, *and* the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

Reader! do observe from those blessed expressions, how the mind of the Prophet is lifted up, in admiring and adoring the riches and fulness of Almighty grace: He takes his contemplation of the greatness, and depth of it, from the vast ocean of congregated waters. It is all free, full, rich, and sovereign! It is not only grace, and abound-

ing grace, but the exceeding riches of his grace; so that *if the iniquity of Israel be sought for, there shall be none; and the sins of Judah shall not be found.* Jeremiah l. 20. And what I chiefly admire in this rich scripture is, the source and fountain of all this overwhelming mercy; namely, that the Lord may perform his truth to Jacob, and his mercy to Abraham; that is, his covenant of redemption, founded in the person, work, and offices, of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom Jehovah had promised Abraham all his seed should be blessed. Genesis xii. 3.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us beg for grace to follow the Prophet's example, and in times of general corruption, as the present, instead of lamenting that we are constrained to dwell with *Mesech*, and to have our habitation among the tents of *Kedar*; make these situations profitable by accepting them as they are really meant, to compel our hearts to leave the society of unfaithful and false men, for the sweet communion of our faithful and true God. Help me, thou dear Emmanuel, to be looking unto thee, and waiting for thee, as the Lord God of my salvation! Take, my soul, the same assurance as the Prophet did, for sure thou hast equal cause, since now redemption work is finished, and compleat; and say, as he did, *My God will hear me.* Yes! if thou canst really and truly call Jesus *thy God*; surely thou canst with confidence really and truly say, *my God will hear me.* And though the enemy may for the moment rejoice; though thou mayest for the hour walk in darkness; yet still, amidst all, thou knowest thy God is *thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory!* And, my soul! let not the Prophet exceed thee, either in admiration, or in love, at beholding the peerless grace of a covenant God in Christ. Hath not the Lord in thine instance, as in his, remembered his faithfulness and truth to a thousand generations; and for Jesus' sake pardoned thy sins, and cast them into the depths of the sea of Jesus' blood! Hail! thou blessed Lord! still shall that song swell in every note, and be the last on the trembling lips of time, and the first and last through all the periods of eternity; *to Him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God and his Father, be glory for ever.* Amen.

Farewell Micah! farewell faithful servant of thy God! I bless the Lord for having sent thee into his service, and having commissioned thee to the delivery of so many precious things as are contained in this prophecy; and if there were no other, for that blessed one concerning my Lord's place of nativity. Surely thy God meant that this part of thy prophetic writings should be peculiarly directed to counteract the dreadful heresy of the last days, concerning the Godhead of my Lord. For how could any Being, less than an eternal Being, have his goings forth from everlasting! Thanks be to God for the services of his Prophets! Blessed, blessed for ever be Jehovah for the Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.