

THE
PROPHET NAHUM.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

NAHUM is placed as the *seventh* of the *twelve* minor Prophets, in his prophecy or vision, as his writings are called, and as it stands in the sacred canon. His name in the original signifies *consolation*; from *Nachah* to guide. He is called the *Elkoshite*; probably a native of *Elkoshai* in Galilee; though some have thought that his father's name was *Elkoshai*. The particular period of his ministry is not exactly ascertained; though in the margin of our Bibles the translators have made it about seven hundred and thirteen years before the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. The burden of his prophecy seems to be principally directed to *Nineveh*; but in reality the great design of his labour was intended for the spiritual consolation of the Church. I do not think it necessary to detain the Reader with an account gathered from early writers concerning this man. For the most part, these things are merely conjectural. And as GOD the HOLY GHOST, while condescending to make use of his ministry, hath thought proper to observe silence concerning the man, it should seem to be our wisdom to do the same. Many of the LORD'S faithful servants which are hidden from our knowledge, who have served the Church in their day and generation, will be brought forward at the great day of the LORD, in their sphere of glory in JESUS; though while upon earth they flourished as the flower of the mountain, which shed its fragrancy, and is but little known or noticed of men. Reader! let us enter upon this sacred Book, as we have all the other inspired writings, with prayer and supplication; that all the blessings intended from it to the Church may be in our enjoyment, and that it may prove an *engrafted word*, which in and through the LORD JESUS, *is able to save our souls!*

CHAP. I.

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The chief points in the opening of Nahum's prophecy, are to set forth the Lord's just judgment on his enemies, and his mercy over his Israel.

THE burden of Nineveh: The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

Here seems a double title to *Nahum's* book. It is a burthen. And it is the book of a vision. Perhaps this double title might signify ruin, and an heavy burthen upon *Nineveh*, and a vision of peace and glory to *Israel*.

2 God *is* jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and *is* furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies.

3 The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*: the LORD *hath* his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet.

4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

7 The LORD *is* good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

8 But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

The Prophet opens his sermon with the most striking text, such as the Lord himself opened his sermon with, when he preached before Moses. See *Exod. xxxiv. 1—7*. It were to weaken the words of this solemn and gracious passage, to offer any comment upon them.

The Lord's sovereignty, and the Lord's grace are awfully set forth. I only beg the Reader to remark how beautifully blended the one is with the other. A child of God that reads this passage, can do as David did, *sing of mercy and of judgment*, and direct his holy song *unto the Lord*. Psalm ci. 1.

9 What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.

10 For while *they be* folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken *as* drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

11 There is *one* come out of thee that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor.

12 Thus saith the LORD; Though *they be* quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through, though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.

13 For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

14 And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, *that* no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image, and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.

It is very evident that the Prophet's whole discourse is directed to warn the *Ninevites*, who thought of destroying Israel, that they should thereby only hasten their own destruction. And the event in the history of that people have so proved. Reader! turn to that sweet scripture promise upon this and every other occasion, for it is a promise that never hath failed or can fail; and may be applied as opportunities need, for God's people in all ages. Isaiah lv. 15, 16, 17. In both spiritual concerns, and temporal, this holds good. But, Reader! do not forget to connect with it the cause, namely Christ. Connect also Psalm lxxii. 17. the blessing is in Him, and 2 Cor. i. 20. the promises. Sweet consideration to the believer!

15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

Here is the blessed verse which throws light upon the whole Chapter, and fully explains the whole. This shews that the Prophet was not speaking of the men of *Nineveh*, or the Babylon of his day; but the oppressors of Jesus's Church of every day, and all the day, during a life of grace. Yea, the mystic *Babylon* of all ages, which joined with the powers of hell, have conspired to crush the cause of the LORD, and His Anointed. Psalm ii. 1, 2. Rev. xvii. 5, 6. How blessedly was the Prophet commissioned in this verse to point to JESUS. And how blessedly also was the Prophet commissioned to comfort *Judah* with the assurance of his coming? Reader! those are sweet feasts of our *Judah* in the present hour, when the presence of JESUS is seen and enjoyed in them! Ordinances are truly blessed, when they lead the heart to CHRIST! Lord grant that they never may be used by any of thy people to keep *from* CHRIST. For this they always do, when forgetting the end, we rest in the means; and lean upon the ordinance, instead of wholly enquiring in the ordinance for the LORD JESUS! See the Lord's solemn expostulation on this subject, by one of the Prophets. Zech. vii. 4, 5, 6.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! think how gracious the Lord is in his attention to his people, even when their sins are calling forth his chastisement. The Church was now going into captivity, but still, though deserving correction, it is the correction of a father; and though the enemy be permitted to afflict, yet they shall not destroy; and in due time the Lord will reckon with them for it.

And what I beg the Reader more especially to regard in this delightful Chapter is, the method the Lord takes to comfort his people, with the tidings of salvation. It was at a period when many hundred years were to run out before the coming of Jesus. But notwithstanding this, as the glorious events of salvation, like the Almighty Author of it, was the same yesterday and to day, and for ever; so the Church of God shall be comforted with the assurance of it in all ages. Reader! do not overlook this! It was this that became the joy, the comfort, the consolation of the faithful through all periods of the Church. *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, all alike lived in the enjoyment of it, and all died in the full assurance of it. The covenant of redemption was, and is, the covenant of eternity. And consequently they are, and must be the same things with all the redeemed; in trouble or joy, in death or in life. Hence *Nahum*, hence *Isaiab*, hence *Paul*, yea all, both Prophets and Apostles, welcome Christ; and the very feet of the publishers of salvation are beautiful. Precious, precious Jesus! what unknown, unexplored, and ever to be admired and adored beauties, are centered in thy One glorious Person! *thou altogether lovely and fairest of ten thousand!*

CHAP. II.

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We have in this Chapter a very awful account of the Lord's judgments. The excellency of Jacob and Israel is said to be turned away; and the Chapter is one continued account of solemn dispensations.

HE that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make *thy* loins strong, fortify *thy* power mightily.

2 For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches.

Most commentators have agreed, that as the burden of *Nahum's* prophecy is concerning *Nineveh*, they confine the observations the Prophet hath made to the destruction of that great city. But, I confess, with me the subject appears to have a much higher and more spiritual meaning. And what is said in the last of those two verses concerning Jacob and Israel, confirm me in my opinion. For if the Lord hath turned away Jacob's excellency, and if the emptiers have emptied them out, surely then *Nineveh*, as well as *Babylon*, may be considered as mystical. And in this sense we may discover the Church, here brought under affliction by the enemies of her salvation, and the exercises of Israel rendered subservient to the promotion of the Redeemer's glory, and the final happiness of his redeemed. If we read this prophecy in this point of view, we shall find much of gospel in it; and the Lord here as in all other instances, correcting Israel in love and mercy.

3 The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men *are* in scarlet: the chariots *shall be* with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir-trees shall be terribly shaken.

4 The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.

5 He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk: they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared.

6 The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.

7 And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead *her* as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts.

8 But Nineveh *is* of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, *shall they cry*; but none shall look back.

9 Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; for *there is* none end of the store, *and* glory out of all the pleasant furniture.

10 She is empty, and void, and waste; and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain *is* in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

11 Where *is* the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, *even* the old lion, walked, *and* the lion's whelp, and none made *them* afraid?

12 The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.

13 Behold, *I am* against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

After the observations I ventured to make on the preceding verses, I do not think it needful to dissect the several parts of the subject contained in this whole paragraph. If I mistake not, the Lord is describing, under a great variety of figures, the character of Israel's foes; their shields, their chariots, their swords, are commissioned in all they do by the Lord. But when they shall have executed, and finished their appointed service, like the rod which a kind but wise father takes to correct a favourite but disobedient child, he throws it away. So the Lord declares. *Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord.* This sums up all in one, the Lord's love to his people; and his displeasure against all their enemies!

REFLECTIONS.

I HAVE often thought that if the ungodly and carnal world could but consider, that all the opposition which they are making against the Church is overruled to the Lord's glory and his people's furtherance; they would, even from motives of ill will, desist sometimes from the exercise of their unprovoked malice. And I have as often thought, if the people of God could but keep in view that the malice of their opposers is not only permitted, but even appointed of the Lord; and like the clouds, pregnant with refreshing showers, must at length break over their head in blessing; how would they bless God for raising up to them enemies, to thwart and call forth their graces into exercise. In the history of *Egypt*, the Lord himself so explains the persecutions *Israel* sustained. *He turned their heart (it is said) to hate his people.* Psalm cv. 25. So that though *Pharaoh* stormed, and the *Egyptians* oppressed them, yet they were but the instruments, the hand was the Lord's. Reader! whatever tends to lead the heart to the Lord, must be of the Lord. And whether *Egypt*, *Assyria*, *Babylon*, or *Nineveh*; whether corruption within, or persecution without; whether our own deceitful hearts, or the world, or the powers of darkness, assault and harrass, and afflict the people of God; wait but the issue, and listen to the voice of the Lord. To every adversary of his Church, the Lord speaks in those decisive words, *behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord!* Blessed Lord Jesus, I would say for myself and Reader, *if thou be for us, what need we care who or what is against us!*

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

We have the continuation of the same subject, as in the two preceding Chapters. Under the character of Nineveh, the Lord is declaring the final destruction of the Church's enemies.

WOE to the bloody city! it is all full of lies
and robbery; the prey departeth not;

2 The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots.

3 The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword, and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses: and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses:

4 Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favoured harlot, the mistress of witch-

crafts: that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.

5 Behold, *I am* against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.

The last verse in this passage serves to throw a light upon the whole; and proves that it is the cause of the Church which the Lord is contending for. And if the Reader attends to the whole prophecy of *Nahum* under this view, I humbly conceive he will find it a blessed portion of the word of God. I do not wish to be considered singular, but I venture to believe, that all we meet with in scripture concerning the nations of the earth, is introduced purely on account of Zion. The care of the Church of the Lord Jesus, is the one sole cause of all the Lord's government of the earth. And to the promotion of the glory of Zion, all the events of nations and empires minister. Hence all things, and all persons, whether for correction or for comfort, are directed and guided by Him, and to his own glory. See Isa. x. 5—12. A striking passage this, to be referred to upon all occasions in subjects of this nature.

6 And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing stock.

7 And it shall come to pass, *that* all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her; whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

8 Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, *that had* the waters round about it, whose rampart *was* the sea, *and* her wall *was* from the sea?

9 Ethiopia and Egypt *were* her strength, and *it was* infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers.

10 Yet *was* she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.

11 Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.

12 All thy strong holds *shall be like* fig-trees with the first ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.

13 Behold, thy people in the midst of thee *are* women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.

14 Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brick-kiln.

15 There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the canker-worm: make thyself many as the canker-worm, make thyself many as the locusts.

16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the canker-worm spoileth, and fleeth away.

17 Thy crowned *are* as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, *but* when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they *are*.

18 Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell *in the dust*: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth *them*.

19 *There is* no healing of thy bruise: thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap their hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

I include the whole of this passage in one view for the sake of shortness, having already extended the Commentary very much beyond the original design. The whole of *Nahum's* prophecy, if taken *literally*, and with an eye to the history of *Nineveh*, and the Church, is interesting. But if read *spiritually*, as typifying in *Nineveh* the enemies of the Church, and the Lord's deliverance of his people, and the final destruction of their foes, in the redemption by Christ, riseth to a degree of sublimity, beautiful, interesting, and glorious. Reader! may the Lord give to us both the sweet and powerful proofs of his divine teaching, that we may *know the things which are freely given to us of God!*

REFLECTIONS.

HERE Reader! let us pause ere we dismiss this short but striking prophecy. See how attentive the Lord the Holy Ghost hath been, in all ages, in watching over the concerns of his Church! And wherefore is it think you, but because all the Persons of the Godhead are engaged in the great design, and each find their glory in the great salvation. Oh! that you and I, thus convinced of the Lord's love and care of his Church, and watchfulness over it, may be watchful also on our part of that love, and never, never lose sight of it in any of the most trying occasions. What shall interrupt, or what shall destroy this care of Jesus concerning his chosen. Sin shall not; for Jesus hath taken away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. The world shall not; for Christ hath overcome the world. Death and hell shall not; for Jesus hath vanquished both. Oh! then, hear Jesus's voice, my brother, in every conflict, which he speaketh to your and his enemies, as in this scripture; *behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts.* Precious Lord Jesus! be thou our strength, our shield, and our exceeding great reward!

Farewell *Nahum!* farewell thou faithful *Elkoshite!* I beg for grace to remember thy blessed words. *Beautiful, indeed, upon the mountains are thy feet, and the feet of all them that bring good tidings, and that publish peace!*

THE

PROPHET HABAKKUK.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE name of this Prophet, *Habakkuk*, which seems to be derived from *Chabak*, to embrace, may be supposed to mean an *Embracer*: though some derive it from *Nebac*, to wrestle. It is well calculated that he delivered his prophecy much about the same time as *Jeremiah*, which was not long before the destruction of the kingdom. So that what is said in the Apocryphal writings of the history of Susanna, concerning *Habakkuk* carrying a dinner to *Daniel* in the lion's den at Babylon, is doubly proved to be fabulous, both on account of date, as well as truth. The opinion of those who conclude *Daniel's dinner* to have been *Habakkuk's* writings, is better founded. For as *Habakkuk* in those writings declared, that *the just should live by faith*, it is possible *Daniel* might call to mind in the den this blessed truth, and feel refreshed from it.