

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter we have an answer expected by the prophet (v. 1), and returned by the Spirit of God, to the complaints which the prophet made of the violences and victories of the Chaldeans in the close of the foregoing chapter. The answer is,

I. That after God has served his own purposes by the prevailing power of the Chaldeans, has tried the faith and patience of his people, and distinguished between the hypocrites and the sincere among them, he will reckon with the Chaldeans, will humble and bring down, not only that proud monarch Nebuchadnezzar, but that proud monarchy, for their boundless and insatiable thirst after dominion and wealth, for which they themselves should at length be made a prey (v. 2-8).

II. That not they only, but all other sinners like them, should perish under a divine woe.

- 1.** Those that are covetous, are greedy of wealth and honours (v. 9, 11).
- 2.** Those that are injurious and oppressive, and raise estates by wrong and rapine (v. 12-14).
- 3.** Those that promote drunkenness that they may expose their neighbours to shame (v. 15-17).
- 4.** Those that worship idols (v. 18-20).

⌄ HABAKKUK 2:1-4

THE PROPHET DIRECTED

Here,

I. The prophet humbly gives his attendance upon God (v. 1): *“I will stand upon my watch, as a sentinel on the walls of a besieged city, or on the borders of an invaded country, that is very solicitous to gain intelligence. I will look up, will look round, will look within, and watch to see what he will say unto me, will listen attentively to the words of his mouth and carefully observe the steps of his providence, that I may not lose the least hint of instruction or direction. I will watch to see what he will say in me”*

(so it may be read), “what the Spirit of prophecy in me will dictate to me, by way of answer to my complaints.” Even in an ordinary way, God not only speaks to us by his word, but speaks in us by our own consciences, whispering to us, *This is the way, walk in it*; and we must attend to the voice of God in both. The prophet's standing upon his *tower*, or high place, intimates his prudence, in making use of the helps and means he had within his reach to know the mind of God, and to be instructed concerning it. Those that expect to hear from God must withdraw from the world, and get above it, must raise their attention, fix their thought, study the scriptures, consult experiences and the experienced, continue instant in prayer, and thus set themselves *upon the tower*. His standing upon his watch intimates his patience, his constancy and resolution; he will wait the time, and weather the point, as a watchman does, but he will have an answer; he will know what God will *say to him*, not only for his own satisfaction, but to enable him as a prophet to give satisfaction to others, and answer their exceptions, when he is reprov'd or argued with. Herein the prophet is an example to us.

1. When we are tossed and perplexed with doubts concerning the methods of Providence, are tempted to think that it is fate, or fortune, and not a wise God, that governs the world, or that the church is abandoned, and God's covenant with his people cancelled and laid aside, then we must take pains to furnish ourselves with considerations proper to clear this matter; we must stand upon our watch against the temptation, that it may not get ground upon us, must set ourselves upon the tower, to see if we can discover that which will silence the temptation and solve the objected difficulties, must do as the psalmist, *consider the days of old* and make a *diligent search* (^{<B776>}Psalm 77:6), must go into the sanctuary of God, and there labour to understand the end of these things (^{<B727>}Psalm 73:17); we must not give way to our doubts, but struggle to make the best of our way out of them.

2. When we have been at prayer, pouring out our complaints and requests before God, we must carefully observe what answers God gives by his word, his Spirit, and his providences, to our humble representations; when David says, *I will direct my prayer unto thee*, as an arrow to the mark, he adds, *I will look up*, will look after my prayer, as a man does after the arrow he has shot, (^{<B88>}Psalm 5:3. We must *hear what God the Lord will speak*, (^{<B88>}Psalm 85:8.

3. When we go to read and hear the word of God, and so to consult the lively oracles, we must set ourselves to observe what God will thereby *say unto us*, to suit our case, what word of conviction, caution, counsel, and comfort, he will bring to our souls, that we may receive it, and submit to the power of it, and may consider what we shall answer, what returns we shall make to the word of God, when we are reprov'd by it.

4. When we are attacked by such as quarrel with God and his providence as the prophet here seems to have been — beset, besieged, as in a tower, by hosts of objectors — we should consider how to answer them, fetch our instructions from God, hear what he says to us for our satisfaction, and have that ready to say to others, *when we are reprov'd*, to satisfy them, as a *reason of the hope that is in us* (^{<40B5>}1 Peter 3:15), and beg of God *a mouth and wisdom*, and that it may be *given us in that same hour what we shall speak*.

II. God graciously gives him the meeting; for he will not disappoint the believing expectations of his people that wait to hear what he will say unto them, but will *speak peace*, will *answer them with good words and comfortable words*, ^{<40B>}Zechariah 1:13. The prophet had complain'd of the prevalence of the Chaldeans, which God had given him a prospect of; now, to pacify him concerning it, he here gives him a further prospect of their fall and ruin, as Isaiah, before this, when he had foretold the captivity in Babylon, foretold also the destruction of Babylon. Now, this great and important event being made known to him by a vision, care is taken to publish the vision, and transmit it to the generations to come, who should see the accomplishment of it.

1. The prophet must *write the vision*, v. 2. Thus, when St. John had a vision of the New Jerusalem, he was ordered to *write*, ^{<40B5>}Revelation 21:5. He must write it, that he might imprint it on his own mind, and make it more clear to himself, but especially that it might be notified to those in distant places and transmitted to those in future ages. What is handed down by tradition is easily mistaken and liable to corruption; but what is written is reduced to a certainty, and preserved safe and pure. We have reason to bless God for written visions, that God has written to us the great things of his prophets as well as of his law. He must *write the vision*, and *make it plain upon tables*, must write it legibly, in large characters, so that *he who runs may read it*, that those who will not allow themselves leisure to read it deliberately may not avoid a *cursorry* view of it. Probably, the

prophets were wont to write some of the most remarkable of their predictions in tables, and to hang them up in the temple, ^(~~AR~~)Isaiah 8:1. Now the prophet is told to *write this very plain*. Note, Those who are employed in preaching the word of God should study plainness as much as may be, so as to make themselves intelligible to the meanest capacities. The things of our everlasting peace, which God has written to us, are made plain, *they are all plain to him that understands* (^(~~AR~~)Proverbs 8:9), and they are published with authority; God himself has prefixed his *imprimatur* to them; he has said, *Make them plain*.

2. The people must wait for the accomplishment of the *vision* (v. 3): “*The vision is yet for an appointed time to come. You shall now be told of your deliverance by the breaking of the Chaldeans' power, and that the time of it is fixed in the counsel and decree of God. There is an appointed time, but it is not near; it is yet to be deferred a great while;*” and that comes in here as a reason why it must be written, that it may be reviewed afterwards and the event compared with it. Note, God has an appointed time for his appointed work, and will be sure to do the work when the time comes; it is not for us to anticipate his appointments, but to wait his time. And it is a great encouragement to wait with patience, that, though the promised favour be deferred long, it will come at last, and be an abundant recompence to us for our waiting: *At the end it shall speak and not lie*. We shall not be disappointed of it, for it will come at the time appointed; nor shall we be disappointed in it, for it will fully answer our believing expectations. The promise may seem silent a great while, but at the end it shall speak; and therefore, *though it tarry* longer than we expected, yet we must continue *waiting for it*, being assured it will come, and willing to tarry until it does come. The day that God has set for the deliverance of his people, and the destruction of his and their enemies, is a day,

(1.) That will surely come at last; it is never adjourned *sine die* — *without fixing another day*, but it will without fail come at the fixed time and the fittest time.

(2.) *It will not tarry*, for *God is not slack, as some count slackness* (^(~~AR~~)2 Peter 3:9); *though it tarry* past our time, yet *it does not tarry* past God's time, which is always the best time.

3. This vision, the accomplishment of which is so long waited for, will be such an exercise of faith and patience as will try and discover men what they are, v. 4.

(1.) There are some who will proudly disdain this vision, whose hearts are so lifted up that they scorn to take notice of it; if God will work for them immediately, they will thank him, but they will not give him credit; their hearts are lifted up towards vanity, and, since God puts them off, they will shift for themselves and not be beholden to him; they think *their own hands sufficient for them*, and God's promise is to them an insignificant thing. That man's soul that is thus *lifted up is not upright in him*; it is not right with God, is not as it should be. Those that either distrust or despise God's all-sufficiency will not walk uprightly with him, ^{<A17>}Genesis 17:1. But,

(2.) Those who are truly good, and whose hearts are upright with God, will value the promise, and venture their all upon it; and, in confidence of the truth of it, will keep close to God and duty in the most difficult trying times, and will then live comfortably in communion with God, dependence on him, and expectation of him. *The just shall live by faith*; during the captivity good people shall support themselves, and live comfortably, by faith in these precious promises, while the performance of them is deferred. *The just shall live by his faith*, by that faith which he acts upon the word of God. This is quoted in the New Testament (^{<A17>}Romans 1:17; ^{<A17>}Galatians 3:11; ^{<A17>}Hebrews 10:38), for the proof of the great doctrine of justification by faith only and of the influence which the grace of faith has upon the Christian life. Those that are made *just by faith shall live*, shall be happy here and for ever; while they are here, they live by it; when they come to heaven faith shall be swallowed up in vision.

^{<A17>}HABAKKUK 2:5-14

JUDGMENT OF THE KING OF BABYLON

The prophet having had orders to *write the vision*, and the people to wait for the accomplishment of it, the vision itself follows; and it is, as divers other prophecies we have met with, the burden of Babylon and Babylon's king, the same that was said to *pass over and offend*, ^{<A17>}Habakkuk 1:11. It reads the doom, some think, of Nebuchadnezzar, who was principally active in the destruction of Jerusalem, or of that monarchy, or of the whole kingdom of the Chaldeans, or of all such proud and oppressive powers as bear hard upon any people, especially upon God's people. Observe,

I. The charge laid down against this enemy, upon which the sentence is grounded, v. 5. The *lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life*, are the entangling snares of men, and great men especially; and we find him that led Israel captive himself led captive by each of these. For,

1. He is sensual and voluptuous, and given to his pleasures: *He transgresses by wine*. Drunkenness is itself a transgression, and is the cause of abundance of transgression. We read of those that *err through wine*, ^{230E}Isaiah 28:7. Belshazzar (in whom particularly this prophecy had its accomplishment) was in the height of his transgression by wine when the hand-writing upon the wall signed the warrant for his immediate execution, pursuant to this sentence, ^{271E}Daniel 5:1.

2. He is haughty and imperious: *He is a proud man*, and his pride is a certain presage of his fall coming on. If great men be proud men, the great God will make them know he is above them. His transgressing by wine is made the cause of his arrogance and insolence: therefore *he is a proud man*. When a man is drunk, though he makes himself as mean as a beast, yet he thinks himself as great as a king, and prides himself in that by which he shames himself. We find *the crown of pride* upon the head of the *drunkards of Ephraim*, and a *woe* to both, ^{230E}Isaiah 28:1.

3. He is covetous and greedy of wealth, and this is the effect of his pride; he thinks himself worthy to enjoy all, and therefore makes it his business to engross all. The Chaldean monarchy aimed to be a universal one. He *keeps not at home*, is not content with his own, which he has an incontestable title to, but thinks it too little, and so enjoys it not, nor takes the comfort he might in his own palace, in his own dominion. His sin is his punishment, his ambition is his perpetual uneasiness. Though the home be a palace, yet to a discontented mind it is a prison. He *enlarges his desire as hell, or the grave*, which daily receives the body of the dead, and yet still cries, *Give, give*; he is *as death*, which continues to devour, and *cannot be satisfied*. Note, It is the sin and folly of many who have a great deal of the wealth of this world that they do not know when they have enough, but the more they have the more they would have, and the more eager they are for it. And it is just with God that the desires which are insatiable should still be unsatisfied; it is the doom passed on those that *love silver* that they shall never be *satisfied with it*, ^{275D}Ecclesiastes 5:10. Those that will not be content with their allotments shall not have the comfort of their achievements. This proud prince is still *gathering to him*

all nations, and heaping to him all people, invading their rights, seizing their properties, and they must not be unless they will be his, and under his command. One nation will not satisfy him unless he has another, and then another, and all at last; as those in a lower sphere, to gratify the same inordinate desire, lay house to house, and field to field, that they may be placed alone in the earth, ^{
}Isaiah 5:8. And it is hard to say which is more to be pitied, the folly of such ambitious princes as place their honour in enlarging their dominions, and not in ruling them well, or the misery of those nations that are harassed and pulled to pieces by them.

II. The sentence passed upon him (v. 6): *Shall not all these take up a parable against him?* His doom is,

- 1.** That, since pride has been his sin, disgrace and dishonour shall be his punishment, and he shall be loaded with contempt, shall be laughed at and despised by all about him, as those that look big, and aim high, deserve to be, and commonly are, when they are brought down and baffled.
- 2.** That, since he has been abusive to his neighbours, those very persons whom he has abused shall be the instruments of his disgrace: *All those shall take up a taunting proverb against him.* They shall have the pleasure of insulting over him and he the shame of being trampled upon by them. Those that shall triumph in the fall of this great tyrant are here furnished with a *parable*, and a *taunting proverb*, to take up against him. *He shall say* (he that draws up the insulting ditty shall say thus), *Ho, he that increases that which is not his! Aha!* what has become of him now? So it may be read in a taunting way. Or, *He shall say*, that is, *the just*, who *lives by his faith*, he to whom the vision is written and made plain, with the help of that shall say this, shall foretel the enemy's fall, even when he sees him flourishing, and *suddenly curse his habitation*, even when he is *taking root*, ^{
}Job 5:3. He shall indeed denounce woes against him.

(1.) Here is a woe against him for increasing his own possessions by invading his neighbour's rights, v. 6-8. He *increases that which is not his*, but other people's. Note, No more of what we have is to be reckoned ours than what we came honestly by; nor will it long be ours, for *wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished*. Let not those that thrive in the world be too forward to bless themselves in it, for, if they do not thrive lawfully, they are under a woe. See here,

[1.] What this prosperous prince is doing; he is *lading himself with thick clay*. Riches are but clay, thick clay; what are gold and silver but white and yellow earth? Those that travel through thick clay are both retarded and dirtied in their journey; so are those that go through the world in the midst of an abundance of the wealth of it; but, as if that were not enough, what fools are those that *load themselves with it*, as if this trash would be their treasure! They burden themselves with continual care about it, with a great deal of guilt in getting, saving, and spending it, and with a heavy account which they must give of it another day. They overload their ship with this thick clay, and so sink it and themselves *into destruction and perdition*.

[2.] See what people say of him, while he is thus increasing his wealth; they cry, "*How long? How long will it be ere he has enough?*" They cry to God, "How long wilt thou suffer this proud oppressor to trouble the nations?" Or they say to one another, "See how long it will last, how long he will be able to keep what he gets thus dishonestly." They dare not speak out, but we know what they mean when they say, *How long?*

[3.] See what will be in the end hereof. What he has got by violence from others, others shall take by violence from him. The Medes and Persians shall make a prey of the Chaldeans, as they have done of other nations, v. 7, 8. "There shall be those that will *bite thee* and *vex thee*; those from whom thou didst not fear any danger, that seemed *asleep*, shall *rise up* and *awake* to be a plague to thee. They shall rise up *suddenly* when thou are most secure, and least prepared to receive the shock and ward off the blow. *Shall they not rise up suddenly?* No doubt they shall, and thou thyself hast reason to expect it, to be dealt with as thou hast dealt with others, that *thou shalt be for booties unto them*, as others have been unto thee, that, according to the law of retaliation, as *thou hast spoiled many nations* so thou shalt thyself be *spoiled* (v. 8); *all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee*." The king of Babylon thought he had brought all the nations round about him so low that none of them would be able to make reprisals upon him; but though they were but a remnant of people, a very few left, yet these shall be sufficient to spoil him, when God has such a controversy with him, *First, For men's blood*, and the thousands of lives that have been sacrificed to his ambition and revenge, especially for the blood of Israelites, which is in a special manner precious to God. *Secondly, For the violence of the land*, his laying waste so many countries, and destroying the fruits of the earth, especially in the land of Israel. *Thirdly, For the violence of the city*, the many cities that he had turned into

ruinous heaps, especially Jerusalem the holy city, and of *all that dwell therein*, who were ruined by him. Note, The violence done by proud men to advance and enrich themselves will be called over again (and must be accounted for) another day, by him *to whom vengeance belongs*.

(2.) Here is a woe against him for coveting still more, and aiming to be still higher, v. 9-11. The crime for which this woe is denounced is much the same with that in the foregoing article — an insatiable desire of wealth and honour; it is *coveting an evil covetousness to his house*, that is, grasping at an abundance for his family. Note, Covetousness is a very evil thing in a family; it brings disquiet and uneasiness into it (*he that is greedy of gain troubles his own house*), and, which is worse, it brings the curse of God upon it and upon all the affairs of it. *Woe to him that gains an evil gain*; so the margin reads it. There is a lawful gain, which by the blessing of God may be a comfort to a house (*a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children*), but what is got by fraud and injustice is ill-got, and will be poor gain, will not only do no good to a family, but will bring poverty and ruin upon it. Now observe,

[1.] What this covetous wretch aims at; it is *to set his nest on high*, to raise his family to some greater dignity than it had before arrived at, or to set it, as he apprehends, out of the reach of danger, that he may be *delivered from the power of evil*, that it may not be in the power of the worst of his enemies to do him a mischief nor so much as to disturb his repose. Note, It is common for men to pretend it as an excuse for their covetousness and ambition that they only consult their own safety, and aim to secure themselves; and yet they do but deceive themselves when they think *their wealth* will be a *strong city* to them, and a *high wall*, for it is so only *in their own conceit*, ²⁰⁸¹ Proverbs 18:11.

[2.] What he will get by it: *Thou hast consulted*, not safety, but *shame*, *to thy house*, by *cutting off many people*, v. 10. Note, An estate raised by iniquity is a scandal to a family. Those that cut off, or undermine, others, to make room for themselves, that impoverish others to enrich themselves, do but consult shame to their houses, and fasten upon them a mark of infamy. Yet that is not the worst of it: *“Thou hast sinned against thy own soul*, hast brought that under guilt and wrath, and endangered that.” Note, Those that do wrong to their neighbour do a much greater wrong to their own souls. But if the sinner pleads, Not guilty, and thinks he has managed his frauds and violence with so much art and contrivance that they cannot

be proved upon him, let him know that if there be no other witnesses against him *the stone shall cry out of the wall* against him, and *the beam out of the timber* in the roof *shall answer it*, shall second it, shall witness it, that the money and materials wherewith he built the house were unjustly gotten, v. 11. The stones and timber cry to heaven for vengeance, as *the whole creation groans under* the sin of man and waits to be delivered from that *bondage of corruption*.

(3.) Here is a woe against him for building a town and a city by blood and extortion (v. 12): He *builds a town*, and is him-self lord of it; he *establishes a city*, and makes it his royal seat. So Nebuchadnezzar did (²⁰⁴⁹Daniel 4:30): *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom?* But it is built with the blood of his own subjects, whom he has oppressed, and the blood of his neighbours, whom he has unjustly invaded; it is *established by iniquity*, by the unrighteous laws that are made for the security of it. *Woe* to him that does so; for the towns and cities thus built can never be established; they will fall, and their founders be buried in the ruins of them. Babylon, which was built by blood and iniquity, did not continue long; its day soon came to fall; and then this woe took effect, when that prophecy, which is expressed as a history (²²⁰⁹Isaiah 21:9), proved a history indeed: *Babylon has fallen, has fallen!* And the destruction of that city was,

[1.] The shame of the Chaldeans, who had taken so much pains, and were at such a vast expense, to fortify it (v. 13): *Is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people* who have laboured so hard to defend that city shall *labour in the very fire*, shall see the out-works which they confided in the strength of set on fire, and shall labour in vain to save them? Or they, in their pursuits of worldly wealth and honour, put themselves to great fatigue, and ran a great hazard, as those that *labour in the fire* do. The worst that can be said of the labourers in God's vineyards is that *they have borne the burden and heat of the day* (⁴⁰¹²Matthew 20:12); but those that are eager in their worldly pursuits *labour in the very fire*, make themselves perfect slaves to their lusts. There is not a greater drudge in the world than he that is under the power of reigning covetousness. And what comes of it? Though they take a world of pains they are but poorly paid for it; for, after all, *they weary themselves for very vanity*; they were told it was vanity, and when they find themselves disappointed of it, and disappointed in it, they will own it is worse than vanity, it is *vexation of spirit*.

[2.] It was the honour of God, as a God of impartial justice and irresistible power; for by the ruin of the Chaldean monarchy (which all the world could not but take notice of) *the earth was filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord*, v. 14. *The Lord is known by these judgments which he executes*, especially when he is pleased to *look upon proud men and abase them*, for he thereby proves himself to be *God alone*, ^{<3811>}Job 40:11, 12. See what good God brings out of the staining and sinking of earthly glory; he thereby manifests and magnifies his own glory, and *fills the earth* with the knowledge of it as plentifully as the *waters cover the sea*, which lie deep, spread far, and shall not be dried up until time shall be no more. Such is the *knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* given by the gospel (^{<4016>}2 Corinthians 4:6), and such was the knowledge of his glory by the miraculous ruin of Babylon. Note, Such as will not be taught the knowledge of God's glory by the judgments of his mouth shall be made to know and acknowledge it by the judgments of his hand.

<3125> HABAKKUK 2:15-20

JUDGMENT PREDICTED

The three foregoing articles, upon which the woes here are grounded, are very near akin to each other. The criminals charged by them are oppressors and extortioners, that raise estates by rapine and injustice; and it is mentioned here again (v. 17), the very same that was said v. 8, for that is the crime upon which the greatest stress is laid; it is *because of men's blood*, innocent blood, barbarously and unjustly shed, which is a provoking crying thing; it is *for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein*, which God will certainly reckon for, sooner or later, as the asserter of right and the avenger of wrong.

But here are two articles more, of a different nature, which carry a *woe* to all those in general to whom they belong, and particularly to the Babylonian monarchs, by whom the people of God were taken and held captives.

I. The promoters of drunkenness stand here impeached and condemned. Belshazzar was one of those; he was so, remarkably that very night that the prophecy of this chapter was fulfilled in the period of his life and kingdom, when he *drank wine before a thousand* of his lords (^{<2011>}Daniel

5:1), began the healths, and forced them to pledge him. And perhaps it was one reason why the succeeding monarchs of Persia made it a law of their kingdom that *in drinking none should compel, but they should do according to every man's pleasure* (as we find, ~~1008~~ Esther 1:8), because they had seen in the kings of Babylon the mischievous consequences of forcing healths and making people drunk. But the woe here stands firm and very fearful against all those, whoever they are, who are guilty of this sin at any time, and in any place, from the stately palace (where that was) to the paltry ale-house. Observe,

1. Who the sinner is that is here articulated against; it is he that *makes his neighbour drunk*, v. 15. To give a neighbour drink who is in want, who is thirsty and poor, though it be but a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, to give drink to weary traveller, nay, and to give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that are heavy of heart, is a piece of charity which is required of us, and shall be recompensed to us. *I was thirsty, and you gave me drink*. But to give a neighbour drink who has enough already, and more than enough, with design to intoxicate him, that he may expose himself, may talk foolishly, and make himself ridiculous, may disclose his own secret concerns, or be drawn in to agree to a bad bargain for himself — this is abominable wickedness; and those who are guilty of it, who make a practice of it, and take a pride and pleasure in it, are rebels against God in heaven, and his sacred laws, factors for the devil in hell, and his cursed interests, and enemies to men on earth, and their honour and welfare; they are like the son of Nebat, who *sinned and made Israel to sin*. To entice others to drunkenness, to *put the bottle to them*, that they may be allured to it by its charms, by *looking on the wine when it is red and gives its colour in the cup*, or to force them to it, obliging them by the rules of the club (and club-laws indeed they are) to drink so many glasses, and so filled, is to do what we can, and perhaps more than we know of, towards the murder both of soul and body; and those that do so have a great deal to answer for.

2. What the sentence is that is here passed upon him. There is a woe to him (v. 15), and a punishment (v. 16) that shall answer to the sin.

(1.) Does he put the cup of drunkenness into the hand of his neighbour? The cup of fury, the cup of trembling, the *cup of the Lord's right hand*, shall be *turned unto him*; the power of God shall be armed against him. That cup which had gone round among the nations, to make them a

desolation, an astonishment, and a hissing, which had made them stumble and *fall*, so that they could *rise no more*, shall at length be put into the hand of the king of Babylon, as was foretold, ^{<2425>}Jeremiah 25:15, 16, 18, 26, 27. Thus the New-Testament Babylon, which had made the nations drunk with the cup of her fornications, shall *have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy*, ^{<680>}Revelation 18:3, 6.

(2.) Does he take a pleasure in putting his neighbour to shame? He shall himself be loaded with contempt: “*Thou art filled with shame for glory, with shame instead of glory*, or art filled now with shame more than ever thou wast with glory; and the glory thou hast been filled with shall but serve to make thy shame the more grievous to thyself, and the more ignominious in the eyes of others. Thou *also shalt drink* of the cup of trembling, and shalt expose thyself by thy fear and cowardice, which shall be as the *uncovering of thy nakedness*, to thy shame; and all about thee shall load thee with disgrace, for *shameful spewing shall be on thy glory*, on that which thou hast most prided thyself in, thy dignity, wealth, and dominion; those whom thou hast made drunk shall themselves spew upon it. For *the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts* (v. 17); thou shalt be hunted and run down with as much violence as ever any wild beasts in Lebanon were, shall be spoiled as they are, and thy fall made a sport of; for thou art as one of the beasts that made them afraid, and therefore they triumph when they have got the mastery of thee.” Or, “It is because of the violence thou hast done to Lebanon, that is, the land of Israel (^{<825>}Deuteronomy 3:25) and the temple (^{<811>}Zechariah 11:1), that God now reckons with thee; that is the sin that now covers thee.”

II. The promoters of idolatry stand here impeached and condemned; and this also was a sin that Babylon was notoriously guilty of; it was the *mother of harlots*. Belshazzar, in his revels, *praised his idols*. And for this, here is a woe against them, and in them against all others that do likewise, particularly the New-Testament Babylon. Now see here,

1. What they do to promote idolatry; they are *mad upon their idols*; so the Chaldeans are said to be, ^{<2678>}Jeremiah 50:38. For,

(1.) They have a great variety of idols, their *graven images* and *molten images*, that people may take their choice, which they like best.

(2.) They are very nice and curious in the framing of them: The *maker of the work* has performed his part admirably well, the *fashioner of his*

fashion (so it is in the margin), that contrived the model in the most significant manner.

(3.) They are at great expense in beautifying and adorning them: *They lay them over with gold and silver*; because these are things people love and dote upon wherever they meet with them, they dress up their idols in them, the more effectually to court the adoration of the children of this world.

(4.) They have great expectations from them: *The maker of the work trusts therein* as his god, puts a confidence in it, and gives honour to it as his god. The worshippers of God give honour to him, by offering up their prayers to him, and waiting to receive instructions and directions from him; and these honours they give to their idols.

[1.] They pray to them: *They say to the wood, Awake for our relief*, “awake to hear our prayers;” and to the dumb stone, “*Arise, and save us*,” as the church prays to her God, *Awake, O Lord! arise*, ^{CHAP.} Psalm 44:23. They own their image to be a god by praying to it. *Deliver me, for thou art my God*, ^{CHAP.} Isaiah 44:17. *Deos qui rogat ille facit — That to which a man addresses petitions is to him a god.*

[2.] They consult them as oracles, and expect to be directed and dictated to by them: *They say to the dumb stone*, though it cannot speak, *yet it shall teach*. What the wicked demon, or no less wicked priest, speaks to them from the image, they receive with the utmost veneration, as of divine authority, and are ready to be governed by it. Thus is idolatry planted and propagated under the specious show of religion and devotion.

2. How the extreme folly of this is exposed. God, by Isaiah, when he foretold the deliverance of his people out of Babylon, largely showed the shameful stupidity and sottishness of idolaters, and so he does here by the prophet, on the like occasion.

(1.) Their images, when they have made them, are but mere matter, which is the meanest lowest rank of being; and all the expense they are at upon them cannot advance them one step above that. They are wholly void both of sense and reason, lifeless and speechless (the idol is a *dumb idol*, a *dumb stone*, and there is *no breath at all in the midst of it*), so that the most minute animal, that has but breath and motion, is more excellent than they. They have not so much as the spirit of a beast.

(2.) It is not in their power to do their worshippers any good (v. 18): *What profits the graven image?* Though it be mere matter, if it were cast into some other form it might be serviceable to some purpose or other of human life; but, as it is made a god of, it is of no profit at all, nor can do its worshippers the least kindness. Nay,

(3.) It is so far from profiting them that it puts a cheat upon them, and keeps them under the power of a strong delusion; they say, *It shall teach*, but it is a *teacher of lies*; for it represents God as having a body, as being finite, visible, and dependent, whereas he is a Spirit, infinite, invisible, and independent, and it confirms those that become vain in their imaginations in the false notions they have of God, and makes the idea of God to be a precarious thing, and what every man pleases. If we may say to the *works of our hands*, *You are our gods*, we may say so to any of the creatures of our own fancy, though the chimera be ever so extravagant. An image is a *doctrine of vanities*; it is *falsehood*, and a *work of errors*, ^{<2108>}Jeremiah 10:8, 14, 15. It is therefore easy to see what the religion of those is, and what they aim at, who recommend those teachers of lies as laymen's books, which they are to study and govern themselves by, when they have locked up from them the book of the scriptures in an unknown tongue.

3. How the people of God triumph in him, and therewith support themselves, when the idolaters thus shame themselves (v. 20): *But the Lord is in his holy temple*.

(1.) *Our rock is not as their rock*, ^{<523>}Deuteronomy 32:31. Theirs are dumb idols; ours is Jehovah, a living God, who is what he is, and not, as theirs, what men please to make him. He is in his holy temple in heaven, the residence of his glory, where we have access to him in the way, not which we have invented, but which he himself has instituted. Compare ^{<488>}Psalms 115:3, *But our God is in the heavens*, and ^{<914>}Psalms 11:4.

(2.) The multitude of their gods which they set up, and take so much pains to support, cannot thrust out our God; he is, and will be, in his holy temple still, and glorious in holiness. They have laid waste his temple at Jerusalem; but he has a temple above that is out of the reach of their rage and malice, but within the reach of his people's faith and prayers.

(3.) Our God will make all the world silent before him, will strike the idolaters as dumb as their idols, convincing them of their folly, and

covering them with shame. He will silence the fury of the oppressors, and check their rage against his people.

(4.) It is the duty of his people to attend him with silent adorings (¹⁶¹Psalm 65:1), and patiently to wait for his appearing to save them in his own way and time. *Be still, and know that he is God,* ³⁰²³Zechariah 2:13.