

CHAPTER 41

This chapter, as the former, is intended both for the conviction of idolaters and for the consolation of all God's faithful worshippers; for the Spirit is sent, and ministers are employed by him, both to convince and to comfort. And however this might be primarily intended for the conviction of Babylonians, and the comfort of Israelites, or for the conviction of those in Israel that were addicted to idolatry, as multitudes were, and the comfort of those that kept their integrity, doubtless it was intended both for admonition and encouragement to us, admonition to keep ourselves from idols and encouragement to trust in God. Here,

I. God by the prophet shows the folly of those that worshipped idols, especially that thought their idols able to contest with him and control him (v. 1-9).

II. He encourages his faithful ones to trust in him, with an assurance that he would take their part against their enemies, make them victorious over them, and bring about a happy change of their affairs (v. 10-20).

III. He challenges the idols, that were rivals with him for men's adoration, to vie with him either for knowledge or power, either to show things to come or to do good or evil (v. 21-29). So that the chapter may be summed up in those words of Elijah, "If Jehovah be God, then follow him; but, if Baal be God, then follow him;" and in the people's acknowledgment, upon the issue of the trial, "Jehovah he is the God, Jehovah he is the God."

 **ISAIAH 41:1-9**

IDOLATRY EXPOSED

That particular instance of God's care for his people Israel in raising up Cyrus to be their deliverer is here insisted upon as a great proof both of his sovereignty above all idols and of his power to protect his people. Here is,

I. A general challenge to the worshippers and admirers of idols to make good their pretensions, in competition with God and opposition to him, v. 1. Is is renewed (v. 21): *Produce your cause*. The court is set, summonses are sent to the islands that lay most remote, but not out of God's jurisdiction, for he is the *Creator and possessor of the ends of the earth*, to make their appearance and give their attendance. Silence (as usual) is proclaimed while the cause is in trying: "*Keep silence before me, and judge nothing before the time*"; while the cause is in trying between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan it becomes all people silently to expect the issue, not to object against God's proceedings, but to be confident that he will carry the day. The defenders of idolatry are called to say what they can in defence of it: "*Let them renew their strength, in opposition to God, and see whether it be equal to the strength which those renew that wait upon him*" (~~2ND~~ Isaiah 40:31); let them try their utmost efforts, whether by force of arms or force of argument. *Let them come near*; they shall not complain that God's *dread makes them afraid* (~~4TH~~ Job 13:21), so that they cannot say what they have to say, in vindication and honour of their idols; no, *let them speak freely: Let us come near together to judgment.*" Note.

1. The cause of God and his kingdom is not afraid of a fair trial; if the case be but fairly stated, it will be surely carried in favour of religion.

2. The enemies of God's church and his holy religion may safely be challenged to say and do their worst for the support of their unrighteous cause. He that *sits in heaven laughs at them*, and the *daughter of Zion despises them*; for *great is the truth and will prevail*.

II. He particularly challenges the idols to do that for their worshippers, and against his, which he had done and would do for his worshippers, and against theirs. Different senses are given of v. 2, concerning *the righteous man raised up from the east*; and, since we cannot determine which is the true, we will make use of each as good.

1. That which is to be proved is,

(1.) That *the Lord is God alone, the first and with the last* (v. 4), that he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, that he governed the world from the beginning, and will to the end of time. He has reigned of old, and will reign for ever; the counsels of his kingdom were from eternity, and the continuance of it will be to eternity.

(2.) That *Israel* is *his servant* (v. 8), whom he owns, and protects, and employs, and in whom he is and will be glorified. As there is a God in heaven, so there is a church on earth that is his particular care. Elijah prays (^{<1186>}1 Kings 18:36), *Let it be known that thou art God, and that I am thy servant.* Now,

2. To prove this he shows,

(1.) That it was he who called Abraham, the father of this despised nation, out of an idolatrous country, and by many instances of his favour *made his name great*, ^{<1112>}Genesis 12:2. He is *the righteous man whom God raised up from the east*. Of him the Chaldee paraphrast expressly understands it: *Who brought Abraham publicly from the east?* To maintain the honour of the people of Israel, it was very proper to show what a figure this great ancestor of theirs made in his day; and v. 8 seems to be the explication of it, where God calls Israel *the seed of Abraham my friend*; and (v. 4) he *calls the generations* (namely, the generations of Israel) *from the beginning*. Also, to put contempt upon idolatry, and particularly the Chaldean idolatry, it was proper to show how Abraham was called from serving other gods (^{<6212>}Joshua 24:2, 3, etc.), so that an early testimony was borne against that idolatry which boasted so much of its antiquity. Also, to encourage the captives in Babylon to hope that God would find a way for their return to their own land, it was proper to remind them how at first he brought their father Abraham out of the same country into this land, to give it to him for an inheritance, ^{<1117>}Genesis 15:7. Now observe what is here said concerning him.

[1.] That he was a *righteous man*, or *righteousness*, a *man of righteousness*, that *believed God*, and it was counted to him for *righteousness*; and so he became the father of all those who by faith in Christ are made the *righteousness of God through him*, ^{<6013>}Romans 4:3, 11; ^{<1152>}2 Corinthians 5:21. He was a great example of righteousness in his day, and *taught his household to do judgment and justice*, ^{<1189>}Genesis 18:19.

[2.] That God *raised him up from the east*, from Ur first and afterwards from Haran, which lay east from Canaan. God would not let him settle in either of those places, but did by him as the eagle by her young, when she stirs up her nest: he raised him out of iniquity and made him pious, out of obscurity and made him famous.

[3.] He *called him to his foot*, to follow him with an implicit faith; for he *went out, not knowing whither he went*, but whom he followed, ^{<818>}Hebrews 11:8. Those whom God effectually calls he calls to his foot, to be subject to him, to attend him, and *follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes*; and we must all either come to his foot or be made his footstool.

[4.] *He gave nations before him*, the nations of Canaan, which he promised to make him master of, and thus far gave him an interest in that the Hittites acknowledged him a mighty prince among them, ^{<1216>}Genesis 23:6. He *made him rule over those kings* whom he conquered for the rescue of his brother Lot, Genesis 14. And when God *gave them as dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow* (that is, made them an easy prey to his catechised servants), *he then pursued them, and passed safely*, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory that Melchizedec himself appeared to celebrate it. Now who did this but the great Jehovah? Can any of the gods of the heathen do so?

(2.) That it is he who will, ere long, raise up Cyrus from the east. It is spoken of according to the language of prophecy as a thing past, because as sure to be done in its season as if it were already done. *God will raise him up in righteousness* (so it may be read, ^{<2513>}Isaiah 45:13), *will call him to his foot*, make what use of him he pleases, and make him victorious over the nations that oppose his coming to the crown, and give him success in all his wars; and he shall be a type of Christ, who is righteousness itself, the Lord our righteousness, whom God will, in the fulness of time, raise up and make victorious over the powers of darkness; so that he shall spoil them and make a show of them openly.

III. He exposes the folly of idolaters, who, notwithstanding the convincing proofs which the God of Israel had given of his being God alone, obstinately persisted in their idolatry, nay, were so much the more hardened in it (v. 5): *The isles of the Gentiles saw this*, not only what God did for Abraham himself, but what he did for his seed, for his sake, how he brought them out of Egypt, and made them *rule over kings*, and *they feared*, ^{<2514>}Exodus 15:14-16. They were afraid, and, according to the summons (v. 1), they *drew near, and came*; they could not avoid taking notice of what God did for Abraham and his seed; but, instead of helping to reason one another out of their sottish idolatries, they helped to confirm one another in them, v. 6, 7.

1. They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon their religion, which they were jealous for the honour of, and were resolved, right or wrong, to adhere to, and therefore were alarmed to appear vigorously for the support of it, as the Ephesians for their Diana. When God, by his wonderful appearances on the behalf of his people, went about to wrest their idols from them, they held them so much the faster, and said one to another, *“Be of good courage; let us unanimously agree to keep up the reputation of our gods. Though Dagon fall before the ark, he shall be set up again in his place.”* One tradesman encourages another to come into a confederacy for the keeping up of the noble craft of god-making. Thus men's convictions often exasperate their corruptions, and they are made worse both by the word and the works of God, which should make them better.

2. They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon themselves. They thought themselves in danger from the growing greatness both of Abraham that was a convert from idolatry, and of the people of Israel that were separatists from it; and therefore they not only had recourse to their old gods for protection, but made *new* ones, ⁽¹⁵²⁷⁾Deuteronomy 32:17. *So the carpenter, having done his part to the timberwork, encouraged the goldsmith to do his part in gilding or overlaying it; and, when it came into the goldsmith's hand, he that smooths with the hammer that polishes it, or beats it thin, quickened him that smote the anvil, bade him be expeditious, and told him it was ready for the soldering, which perhaps was the last operation about it, and then it is fastened with nails, and you have a god of it presently. Do sinners thus animate and quicken one another in the ways of sin? And shall not the servants of the living God both stir up one another to, and strengthen one another in, his service? Some read all this ironically, and by way of permission: Let them help every one his neighbour; let the carpenter encourage the goldsmith; but all in vain; idols shall fall for all this.*

IV. He encourages his own people to trust in him (v. 8, 9): *“But thou, Israel, art my servant. They know me not, but thou knowest me, and knowest better than to join with such ignorant besotted people as these”* (for it is intended for a warning to the people of God not to *walk in the way of the heathen*); *“they put themselves under the protection of these impotent deities, but thou art under my protection. Those that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusts in them; but thou, O Israel! art the servant of a better Master.”* Observe what is suggested here

for the encouragement of God's people when they are threatened and insulted over.

1. They are God's servants, and he will not see them abused, especially for what they do in his service: *Thou art my servant* (v. 8), and (v. 9) *"I have said unto thee, Thou art my servant; and I will not go back from my word."*
2. He has *chosen* them to be a peculiar people to himself. They were not forced upon him, but of his own good-will he set them apart.
3. They were the seed of Abraham his friend. It was the honour of Abraham that he was *called the friend of God* (^{<3423>}James 2:23), whom God covenanted and conversed with as a friend, and the *man of his counsel*; and *this honour have all the saints*, ^{<4855>}John 15:15. And for the father's sake the people of Israel were beloved. God was pleased to look upon them as the posterity of an old friend of his, and therefore to be kind to them; for the covenant of friendship was made with Abraham and his seed.
4. He had sometimes, when they had been scattered among the heathen, fetched them from the ends of the earth and taken them out of the hands of the chief ones thereof, and therefore he would not now abandon them. Abraham their father was fetched from a place at a great distance, and they in his loins; and those who had been thus far-fetched and dear-bought he could not easily part with.
5. He had not yet cast them away, though they had often provoked him, and therefore he would not now abandon them. What God has done for his people, and what he has further engaged to do, should encourage them to trust in him at all times.

^{<3410>}ISAIAH 41:10-20

ISRAEL ENCOURAGED

The scope of these verses is to silence the fears, and encourage the faith, of the servants of God in their distresses. Perhaps it is intended, in the first place, for the support of God's Israel, in captivity; but all that faithfully serve God *through patience and comfort of this scripture may have hope.*

And it is addressed to Israel as a single person, that it might the more easily and readily be accommodated and applied by every Israelite indeed to himself. That is a word of caution, counsel, and comfort, which is so often repeated, *Fear thou not*; and again (v. 13), *Fear not*; and (v. 14), *“Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not the threatenings of the enemy, doubt not the promise of thy God; fear not that thou shalt perish in thy affliction or that the promise of thy deliverance shall fail.”* It is against the mind of God that his people should be a timorous people. For the suppressing of fear he assures them,

I. That they may depend upon his presence with them as their God, and a God all-sufficient for them in the worst of times. Observe with what tenderness God speaks, and how willing he is to let the heirs of promise know the immutability of his counsel, and how desirous to make them easy: *“Fear thou not, for I am with thee, not only within call, but present with thee; be not dismayed at the power of those that are against thee, for I am thy God, and engaged for thee. Art thou weak? I will strengthen thee. Art thou destitute of friends? I will help thee in the time of need. Art thou ready to sink, ready to fall? I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, that right hand which is full of righteousness, in dispensing rewards and punishments,”* ⁴⁹⁸⁰Psalm 48:10. And again (v. 13) it is promised,

1. That God will strengthen their hands, that is, will help them: *“I will hold thy right hand, go hand in hand with thee”* (so some): he will take us by the hand as our guide, to lead us in our way, will help us up when we are fallen or prevent our falls; when we are weak he will hold us upwaving, he will fix ustrembling, he will encourage us, and so *hold us by the right hand,* ⁴⁹⁷³Psalm 73:23.

2. That he will silence their fears: *Saying unto thee, Fear not.* He has said it again and again in his word, and has there provided sovereign antidotes against fear: but he will go further; he will by his Spirit say it to their hearts, and make them to hear it, and so will help them.

II. That though their enemies be now very formidable, insolent, and severe, yet the day is coming when God will reckon with them and they shall triumph over them. There are those that are incensed against God's people, that *strive with them* (v. 11), that war against them (v. 12), that hate them, that seek their ruin, and are continually picking quarrels with

them. But let not God's people be incensed at them, nor strive with them, nor render evil for evil; but wait God's time, and believe,

1. That they shall be convinced of the folly, at least, if not of the sin of striving with God's people; and, finding it to no purpose, *they shall be ashamed and confounded*, which might bring them to repentance, but will rather fill them with rage.

2. That they shall be quite ruined and undone (v. 11): *They shall be as nothing* before the justice and power of God. When God comes to deal with his proud enemies he makes nothing of them. Or they shall be brought to nothing, shall be as if they had never been. This is repeated (v. 12): *They shall be as nothing and as a thing of nought*, or as that which is gone and has failed. Those that were formidable shall become despicable; those that fancied they could do any thing shall be able to bring nothing to pass; those that made a figure in the world, and a mighty noise, shall become mere ciphers and be buried in silence. They shall perish, not only be nothing, but be miserable: *Thou shalt seek them*, shalt enquire what has become of them, that they do not appear as usual, but thou *shalt not find them* as David, ^{<4876>}Psalm 37:36. *I sought him, but he could not be found.*

III. That they themselves should become a terror to those who were now a terror to them, and victory should turn on their side, v. 14-16. See here,

1. How Jacob and Israel are reduced and brought very low. It is the *worm Jacob*, so little, so weak, and so defenceless, despised and trampled on by every body, forced to creep even into the earth for safety; and we must not wonder that Jacob has become a worm, when even Jacob's King calls himself *a worm and no man*, ^{<4926>}Psalm 22:6. God's people are sometimes as worms, in their humble thoughts of themselves and their enemies' haughty thoughts of themworms, but not vipers, as their enemies are, not of the serpent's seed. God regards Jacob's low estate, and says, "*Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not that thou shalt be crushed; and you men of Israel*" (*you few men*, so some read it, *you dead men*, so others) "do not give up yourselves for gone notwithstanding." Note, The grace of God will silence fears even when there seems to be the greatest cause for them. *Perplexed but not in despair.*

2. How Jacob and Israel are advanced from this low estate, and made as formidable as ever they have been despicable. But *by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?* We are here told: *I will help thee, saith the Lord;*

and it is the honour of God to help the weak. He will help them, for he is their Redeemer, who is wont to redeem them, who has undertaken to do it. Christ is the Redeemer, from him is our help found. He will help them, for he is the *Holy One of Israel*, worshipped among them in the beauty of holiness and engaged by promise to them. The Lord will help them by enabling them to help themselves and making Jacob to become a *threshing instrument*. Observe, He is but an instrument, a tool in God's hand, that he is pleased to make use of; and he is an instrument of God's making and is no more than God makes him. But, if God make him a threshing instrument, he will make use of him, and therefore will make him fit for use, *new* and *sharp*, and *having teeth*, or sharp spikes; and then, by divine direction and strength, *thou shalt thresh the mountains*, the highest, and strongest, and most stubborn of thy enemies: thou shalt not only beat them, but *beat them small*; they shall not be a corn threshed out, which is valuable, and is carefully preserved (such God's people are when they are under the flail, ^{231D}Isaiah 21:10: *O my threshing! yet the corn of my floor*, that shall not be lost); but these are made *as chaff*, which is good for nothing, and which the husbandman is glad to get rid of. He pursues the metaphor, v. 16. Having threshed them, *thou shalt winnow them, and the wind shall scatter them*. This perhaps had its accomplishment, in part, in the victories of the Jews over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees; but it seems in general designed to read the final doom of all the implacable enemies of the church of God, and to have its accomplishment likewise in the triumphs of the cross of Christ, the gospel of Christ, and all the faithful followers of Christ, over the powers of darkness, which, first or last, shall all be dissipated, and in Christ all believers shall be more than conquerors, and *he that overcomes shall have power over the nations*, ^{412b}Revelation 2:26.

IV. That, hereupon, they shall have abundance of comfort in God, and God shall have abundance of honour from them: *Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord*, v. 16. When we are freed from that which hindered our joy, and are blessed with that which is the matter of it, we ought to remember that God is our exceeding joy and in him all our joys must terminate. When we rejoice over our enemies we must rejoice in the Lord, for to him alone we owe our liberties and victories. “Thou shalt also *glory in the Holy One of Israel*, in thy interest in him and relation to him, and what he has done for thee.” And, if thus we make God our praise and glory, we become to him for a praise and a glory.

V. That they shall have seasonable and suitable supplies of every thing that is proper for them in the time of need; and, if there be occasion, God will again do for them as he did for Israel in their march from Egypt to Canaan, v. 17-19. When the captives, either in Babylon or in their return thence, are in distress for want of water or shelter, God will take care of them, and, one way or other, make their journey, even through a wilderness, comfortable to them. But doubtless this promise has more than such a private interpretation. Their return out of Babylon was typical of our redemption by Christ; and so the contents of these promises,

1. Were provided by the gospel of Christ. That glorious discovery of his love has given full assurance to all those who hear this joyful sound that God has provided inestimable comforts for them, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, the balancing of all their griefs, and the answering of all their prayers.

2. They are applied by the grace and Spirit of Christ to all believers, that they may have strong consolation in their way and a complete happiness in their end. Our way to heaven lies through the wilderness of this world. Now,

(1.) It is here supposed that the people of God, in their passage through this world, are often in straits: *The poor and needy seek water, and there is none; the poor in spirit hunger and thirst after righteousness.* The soul of man, finding itself empty and necessitous, seeks for satisfaction somewhere, but soon despairs of finding it in the world, that has nothing in it to make it easy: creatures are *broken cisterns, that can hold no water;* so that *their tongue fails for thirst,* they are weary of seeking that satisfaction in the world which is not to be had in it. Their sorrow makes them thirsty; so does their toil.

(2.) It is here promised that, one way or other, all their grievances shall be redressed and they shall be made easy.

[1.] God himself will be nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for. Let all the praying people of God take notice of this, and take comfort of it; he has said, *“I the Lord will hear them, will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them; I will be with them, as I have always been, in their distresses.”* While we are in the wilderness of this world this promise is to us what the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel, an assurance of God's gracious presence.

[2.] They shall have a constant supply of fresh water, as Israel had in the wilderness, even where one would least expect it (v. 18): *I will open rivers in high places*, rivers of grace, rivers of pleasure, *rivers of living water*, which he spoke of the Spirit (⁴⁰⁷⁸John 7:38, 39), that Spirit which should be poured out upon the Gentiles, who had been as high places, dry and barren, and lifted up on their own conceit above the necessity of that gift. And there shall be *fountains in the midst of the valleys*, the valleys of Baca (⁴³⁸⁶Psalms 84:6), that are sandy and wearisome; or among the Jews, who had been as fruitful valleys in comparison with the Gentile mountains. The preaching of the gospel to the world turned that wilderness into a pool of water, yielding fruit to the owner of it and relief to the travellers through it.

[3.] They shall have a pleasant shade to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, as Israel when they pitched at Elim, where they had not only wells of water, but palm-trees (⁴²⁵⁷Exodus 15:27): *"I will plant in the wilderness the cedar*, v. 19. I will turn the wilderness into an orchard or garden, such as used to be planted with these pleasant trees, so that they shall pass through the wilderness with as much ease and delight as a man walks in his grove. These trees shall be to them what the pillar of cloud was to Israel in the wilderness, a shelter from the heat." Christ and his grace are so to believers, *as the shadow of a great rock*, ²³¹⁰Isaiah 32:2. When God sets up his church in the Gentile wilderness there shall be as great a change made by it in men's characters as if thorns and briars were turned into cedars, and fir-trees, and myrtles; and by this a blessed change is described, ²⁵¹³Isaiah 55:13.

[4.] They shall see and acknowledge the hand of God, his power and his favour, in this, v. 20. God will do these strange and surprising things on purpose to awaken them to a conviction and consideration of his hand in all: *That they may see* this wonderful change, *and knowing* that it is above the ordinary course and power of nature may consider that therefore it comes from a superior power, and, comparing notes upon it, *may understand together*, and concur in the acknowledgment of it, *that the hand of the Lord*, that mighty hand of his which is stretched out for his people and stretched out to them, *has done this*, and *the Holy One of Israel has created it*, made it anew, made it out of nothing, made it for the comfort of his people. Note, God does great things for his people, that he may be taken notice of.

IDOLATRY EXPOSED

The Lord, by the prophet, here repeats the challenge to idolaters to make out the pretensions of their idols: “*Produce your cause* (v. 21) and make your best of it; *bring forth the strongest reasons* you have to prove that your idols are gods, and worthy of your adoration.” Note, There needs no more to show the absurdity of sin than to produce the reasons that are given in defence of it, for they carry with them their own confutation.

I. The idols are here challenged to bring proofs of their knowledge and power. Let us see what they can inform us of, and what they can do. Understanding and active power are the accomplishments of a man. Whoever pretends to be a god must have these in perfection; and have the idols made it to appear that they have? No;

1. “They can tell us nothing that we did not know before, so ignorant are they. We challenge them to inform us,”

(1.) “What has been formerly: *Let them show the former things*, and raise them out of the oblivion in which they were buried” (God inspired Moses to write such a history of the creation as the gods of the heathen could never have dictated to any of their enthusiasts); or “let the defenders of idols tell us what mighty achievements they can boast of as performed by their gods in former times. What did they ever do that was worth taking notice of? Let them specify any thing, and it shall be considered, its due weight shall be given it, and it shall be compared with the latter end of it; and if, in the issue, it prove to be as great as it pretended to be, they shall have the credit of it.”

(2.) “We challenge them to tell us what shall happen, to declare to us *things to come* (v. 22), and again (v. 23), *show the things that are to come hereafter*. Give this evidence of your omniscience, that nothing can be hidden from you, and of your sovereignty and dominion. Make it to appear that you have the doing of all, by letting us know beforehand what you deign to do. Do this kindness to the world; let them know what is to come, that they may provide accordingly. Do this, and we will own that you are gods above us, and gods to us, and worthy of our adoration.” No creature

can foretel things to come, otherwise than by divine information, with any certainty.

2. “They can do nothing that we cannot do ourselves, so impotent are they.” He challenges them to do either *good or evil*, good to their friends or evil to their enemies: “Let them do, if they can, any thing extraordinary, that people will admire and be affected with. Let them either bless or curse, with power. Let us see them either inflict such plagues such as God brought on Egypt or bestow such blessings as God bestowed on Israel. Let them do some great thing, and we shall be amazed when we see it, and frightened into a veneration of them, as many have been into a veneration of the true God.” That which is charged upon these idols, and let them disprove it if they can, is that *they are of nothing*, v. 24. Their claims have no foundation at all, nor is there any ground or reason in the least for men's paying them the respect they do; there is nothing in them worthy our regard. “They are less than nothing, worse than nothing;” so some read it. “*The work they do is of nought*, and so is the ado that is made about them. There is no pretence or colour for it; it is all a jest; it is all a sham put upon the world; and therefore *he that chooses you*, and so give you your deity, and” (as some read it) “that delights in you, *is an abomination*;” so some take it. A servant is at liberty to choose his master, but a man is not at liberty to choose his God. He that chooses any other than the true God chooses an abomination; his choosing it makes it so.

II. God here produces proofs that he is the true God, and that there is none besides him. Let him produce his strong reasons.

1. He has an irresistible power. This he will shortly make to appear in the raising up of Cyrus and making him a type of Christ (v. 25): *He will raise him up from the north and from the rising of the sun*. Cyrus by his father was a Mede, by his mother a Persian; and his army consisted of Medes, whose country lay north, and Persians, whose country lay east, from Babylon. God will raise him up to great power, and he shall come against Babylon with ends of his own to serve. But,

(1.) *He shall proclaim God's name*; so it may be read. He shall publish the honour of the God of Israel; so he did remarkably when, in his proclamation for the release of the Jews out of their captivity, he acknowledged that the Lord God of Israel was the Lord God of heaven, and *the God*: and he might be said to call on his name when he

encouraged the building of his temple, and very probably did himself call upon him and pray to him, ^{<450E>}Ezra 1:2, 3.

(2.) All opposition shall fall before him: *He shall come upon the princes of Babylon, and all others that stood in his way, as mortar, and trample upon them as the potter treads clay, to serve his own purposes with it.* Christ, as man, was raised up from the north, for Nazareth lay in the northern parts of Canaan; as the angel of the covenant, he ascends from the east. He maintained the honour of heaven (*he shall call upon my name*), and broke the powers of hell, came upon the prince of darkness as mortar and trod him down.

2. He has an infallible foresight. He would not only do this, but he did now, by his prophet, foretel it. Now the false gods not only could not do it, but they could not foresee it.

(1.) He challenges them to produce any of their pretended deities, or their diviners, that had given notice of this, or could (v. 26): “*Who has declared from the beginning any thing of this kind, or has told it before-time? Tell us if there be any that you know of, for we know not any; if there be any, we will say, He is righteous, he is true, his cause is just, his claims are proved, and he is in the right in demanding to be worshipped.*” This agrees with v. 22, 23.

(2.) He challenges to himself the sole honour of doing it and foretelling it (v. 27): *I am the first (so it may be read) that will say to Zion, Behold, behold them, that will let the people of Israel know their deliverers are at hand (for there were those who understood by books, God's books, the approach of the time, ^{<270E>}Daniel 9:2), and I am he that will give to Jerusalem one that brings good tidings, these good tidings of their enlargement.* This is applicable to the work of redemption, in which the Lord showed himself much more than in the release of the Jews out of Babylon: he it was that contrived our salvation, and he brought it about, and he has given to us the glad tidings of reconciliation.

III. Judgment is here given upon this trial.

1. None of all the idols had foretold, or could foresee, this work of wonder. Other nations besides the Jews were released out of captivity in Babylon by Cyrus, or at least were greatly concerned in the revolution of the monarchy and there transferring of it to the Persians; and yet none of

them had any intelligence given them of it beforehand, by any of their gods or prophets: “*There is none that shows* (v. 26), *none that declares*, none that gives the least intimation of it; *there is none* of the nations *that hears your words*, that can pretend to have heard from their gods such words as you, O Israelites! have heard from your God, by your prophets,” ^{<477>}Psalm 147:20. None of all the gods of the nations have shown their worshippers the way of salvation, which God will show by the Messiah. The good tidings which the Lord will send in the gospel is a mystery hidden from ages and generations, ^{<465>}Romans 16:25, 26.

2. None of those who pleaded for them could produce any instance of their knowledge or power that had in it any colour of proof that they were gods. All their advocates were struck dumb with this challenge (v. 28): “*I beheld, and there was no man* that could give evidence for them, even among those that were their most zealous admirers; *and there was no counsellor*, none that could offer any thing for the support of their cause. Even among the idols themselves there was none fit to give counsel in the most trivial matters, and yet there were those that asked counsel of them in the most important and difficult affairs. When I asked them what they had to say for themselves they stood mute; the case was so plain against them that there was *none who could answer a word.*” Judgment must therefore be given against the defendant upon *Nihil dicit* *He is mute*. He has nothing to say for himself. *He was speechless*, ^{<422>}Matthew 22:12.

3. Sentence is therefore given according to the charge exhibited against them (v. 24): “*Behold, they are all vanity* (v. 29); they are a lie and a cheat; they are not in themselves what they pretend to be, nor will their worshippers find that in them which they promise themselves. *Their works are nothing*, of no force, of no worth; their enemies need fear no hurt from them; their worshippers can hope for no good from them. *Their molten images*, and indeed all their images, *are wind and confusion*, vanity and vexation; those that worship them will be deceived in them, and will reflect upon their own folly with the greatest bitterness. Therefore, *dearly beloved, flee from idolatry*,” ^{<404>}1 Corinthians 10:14.