

CHAPTER 66

The scope of this chapter is much the same as that of the foregoing chapter and many expressions of it are the same; it therefore looks the same way, to the different state of the good and bad among the Jews at their return out of captivity, but that typifying the rejection of the Jews in the days of the Messiah, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom in the world. The first verse of this chapter is applied by Stephen to the dismantling of the temple by the planting of the Christian church (~~409~~ Acts 7:49, 50), which may serve as a key to the whole chapter. We have here,

- I.** The contempt God puts upon ceremonial services in comparison with moral duties, and an intimation therein of his purpose shortly to put an end to the temple, and sacrifice and reject those that adhered to them (v. 1-4).
- II.** The salvation God will in due time work for his people out of the hands of their oppressors (v. 5), speaking terror to the persecutors (v. 6) and comfort to the persecuted, a speedy and complete deliverance (v. 7-9), a joyful settlement (v. 10, 11), the accession of the Gentiles to them, and abundance of satisfaction therein (v. 12-14).
- III.** The terrible vengeance which God will bring upon the enemies of his church and people (v. 15-18).
- IV.** The happy establishment of the church upon large and sure foundations, its constant attendance on God and triumph over its enemies (v. 19-24). And we may well expect that this evangelical prophet, here, in the close of his prophecy, should (as he does) look as far forward as to the latter days, to the last day, to the days of eternity.

~~2761~~ **ISAIAH 66:1-4**

THE VANITY OF MERE RITUAL OBEDIENCE

Here,

I. The temple is slighted in comparison with a gracious soul, v. 1, 2. The Jews in the prophet's time, and afterwards in Christ's time, gloried much in the temple and promised themselves great things from it; to humble them therefore, and to shake their vain confidence, both the prophets and Christ foretold the ruin of the temple, that God would leave it and then it would soon be desolate. After it was destroyed by the Chaldeans it soon recovered itself and the ceremonial services were revived with it; but by the Romans it was made a perpetual desolation, and the ceremonial law was abolished with it. That the world might be prepared for this, they were often told, as here, of what little account the temple was with God.

1. That he did not need it. Heaven is the throne of his glory and government; there he sits, infinitely exalted in the highest dignity and dominion, above all blessing and praise. The earth is his footstool, on which he stands, over-ruling all the affairs of it according to his will. If God has so bright a throne, so large a footstool, *where then is the house they can build unto God*, that can be the residence of his glory, or *where is the place of his rest*? What satisfaction can the Eternal Mind take in a house made with men's hands? What occasion has he, as we have, for a house to repose himself in, who *faints not neither is weary*, who neither slumbers nor sleeps? Or, if he had occasion, he *would not tell us* (⁴⁸⁰Psalm 50:12), for *all these things hath his hand made*, heaven and all its courts, earth and all its borders, and all the hosts of both. *All these things have been*, have had their beginning, by the power of God, who was happy from eternity before they were, and therefore could not be benefited by them. *All these things are* (so some read it); they still continue, upheld by the same power that made them; so that *our goodness extends not to him*. If he required a house for himself to dwell in, he would have made one himself when he made the world; and, if he had made one, it would have continued to this day, as other creatures do, according to his ordinance; so that he had no need of a temple made with hands.

2. That he would not heed it as he would a humble, penitent, gracious heart. He has a heaven and earth of his own making, and a temple of man's making; but he overlooks them all, that he may look with favour to him that is poor in spirit, humble and serious, self-abasing and self-denying, whose heart is truly contrite for sin, penitent for it, and in pain to get it pardoned, and who *trembles at God's word*, not as Felix did, with a transient qualm that was over when the sermon was done, but with an habitual awe of God's majesty and purity and an habitual dread of his

justice and wrath. Such a heart is a living temple for God; he dwells there, and it is the place of his rest; it is like heaven and earth, his throne and his footstool.

II. Sacrifices are slighted when they come from ungracious hands. *The sacrifice of the wicked* is not only unacceptable, but it *is an abomination to the Lord* (^{<2168>}Proverbs 15:8); this is largely shown here, v. 3, 4. Observe,

1. How detestable their sacrifices were to God. The carnal Jews, after their return out of captivity, though they relapsed not to idolatry, grew very careless and loose in the service of God; they brought the *torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice* (^{<3018>}Malachi 1:8, 13), and this made their services abominable to God; they had no regard to their sacrifices, and therefore how could they think God would have any regard to them? The unbelieving Jews, after the gospel was preached and in it notice given of the offering up of the great sacrifice, which put an end to all the ceremonial services, continued to offer sacrifices, as if the law of Moses had been still in force and could *make the comers thereunto perfect*: this was an abomination. *He that kills an ox* for his own table is welcome to do it; but he that now kills it, that thus kills it, for God's altar, *is as if he slew a man*; it is as great an offence to God as murder itself; he that does it does in effect set aside Christ's sacrifice, *treads under foot the blood of the covenant*, and makes himself accessory to the guilt of *the body and blood of the Lord*, setting up what Christ died to abolish. *He that sacrifices a lamb*, if it be a corrupt thing, and not the male in his flock, the best he has, if he think to put God off with any thing, he affronts him, instead of pleasing him; it is *as if he cut off a dog's neck*, a creature in the eye of the law so vile that, whereas an ass might be redeemed, the price of a dog was never to be brought into the treasury, (^{<1238>}Deuteronomy 23:18. *He that offers an oblation*, a meat offering or drink-offering, is as if he thought to make atonement with *swine's blood*, a creature that must not be eaten nor touched, the *broth of it* was abominable (^{<2504>}Isaiah 65:4), much more the blood of it. *He that burns incense to God*, and so puts contempt upon the incense of Christ's intercession, is *as if he blessed an idol*; it was as great an affront to God as if they had paid their devotions to a false god. Hypocrisy and profaneness are as provoking as idolatry.

2. What their wickedness was which made their sacrifices thus detestable. It was *because they had chosen their own ways*, the ways of their own wicked hearts, and not only their hands did but *their souls delighted in*

their abominations. They were vicious and immoral in their conversations, chose the way of sin rather than the way of God's commandments, and took pleasure in that which was provoking to God; this made their sacrifices so offensive to God, ^{2311B}Isaiah 1:11-15. Those that pretend to honour God by a profession of religion, and yet live wicked lives, put an affront upon him, as if he were the patron of sin. And that which was an aggravation of their wickedness was that they persisted in it, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to repent and reform; they turned a deaf ear to all the warnings of divine justice and all the offers of divine grace: *When I called, none did answer,* as before, ^{236D}Isaiah 65:12. And the same follows here that did there: *They did evil before my eyes.* Being deaf to what he said, they cared not what he saw, but *chose that in which they knew he delighted not.* How could those expect to please him in their devotions who took no care to please him in their conversations, but, on the contrary, designed to provoke him?

3. The doom passed upon them for this. *They chose their own ways,* therefore, says God, I also will *choose their delusions.* *They have made their choice* (as Mr. Gataker paraphrases it), *and now I will make mine; they have taken what course they pleased with me, and I will take what course I please with them.* I will choose their *illusions, or mockeries* (so some); as they have mocked God and dishonoured him by their wickedness, so God will give them up to their enemies, to be trampled upon and insulted by them. Or they shall be deceived by those vain confidences with which they have deceived themselves. God will make their sin their punishment; they shall be beaten with their own rod and hurried into ruin by their own delusions. God will *bring their fears upon them,* that is, will bring upon them that which shall be a great terror to them, or that which they themselves have been afraid of and thought to escape by sinful shifts. Unbelieving hearts, and unpurified unpacified consciences, need no more to make them miserable than to have their own fears brought upon them.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE PERSECUTED

The prophet, having denounced God's judgments against a hypocritical nation, that made a jest of God's word and would not answer him when he called to them, here turns his speech to those that *trembled at his word*, to comfort and encourage them; they shall not be involved in the judgments that are coming upon their unbelieving nation. Ministers must distinguish thus, that, when they speak terror to the wicked, they may not *make the hearts of the righteous sad*. *Bone Christiane, hoc nihil ad te — Good Christian, this is nothing to thee*. The prophet, having assured those that tremble at God's word of a gracious look from him (v. 2), here brings them a gracious message from him. The word of God has comforts in store for those that by true humiliation for sin are prepared to receive them. There were those (v. 4) who, when *God spoke, would not hear*; but, if some will not, others will. If the heart *tremble at the word*, the ear will be open to it. Now what is here said to them?

I. Let them know that God will plead their just but injured cause against their persecutors (v. 5): *Your brethren that hated you said, Let the Lord be glorified. But he shall appear to your joy*. This perhaps might have reference to the case of some of the Jews at their return out of captivity; but nothing like it appears in the history, and therefore it is rather to be referred to the first preachers and professors of the gospel among the Jews, to whose case it is very applicable. Observe,

1. How the faithful servants of God were persecuted: *Their brethren hated them*. The apostles were Jews by birth, and yet even in the cities of the Gentiles the Jews they met with there were their most bitter and implacable enemies and *stirred up the Gentiles* against them. The spouse complains (²¹⁶Song of Solomon 1:6) that her *mother's children were angry with her*. Pilate upbraided our Lord Jesus with this, *Thy own nation have delivered thee unto me*, (⁴⁸⁵John 18:35). Their brethren, who should have loved them and encouraged them for their work's sake hated them, and cast them out of their synagogues, excommunicated them as if they had been the greatest blemishes, when they were really the greatest blessings, of their church and nation. This was a fruit of the old enmity in the *seed of the serpent* against the *seed of the woman*. Those that hated

Christ hated his disciples, because they supported his kingdom and interest (^{<435>}John 15:18), and they *cast them out for his name's sake*, because they were called by his name, and called upon his name, and laid out themselves to advance his name. Note, It is no new thing for church censures to be misapplied, and for her artillery, which was intended for her defence, to be turned against her best friends, by the treachery of her governors. And those that did this *said, Let the Lord be glorified*; they pretended conscience and a zeal for the honour of God and the church in it, and did it with all the formalities of devotion. Our Saviour explains this, and seems to have reference to it, ^{<446>}John 16:2. *They shall put you out of their synagogues, and whosoever kills you will think that he does God service. In nomine Domini incipit omne malum — In the name of the Lord commences evil of every kind.* Or we may understand it as spoken in defiance of God: “You say God will be glorified in your deliverance; *let him be glorified then; let him make speed and hasten his work* (^{<2159>}Isaiah 5:19); *let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*” Some take it to be the language of the profane Jews in captivity, bantering their brethren that hoped for deliverance, and ridiculing the expectations they often comforted themselves with, that God would shortly be glorified in it. They thus did what they could to *shame the counsel of the poor*, ^{<1446>}Psalms 14:6.

2. How they were encouraged under these persecutions: “Let your faith and patience hold out yet a little while; your enemies hate you and oppress you, your brethren hate you and cast you out, but your Father in heaven loves you, and will appear for you when no one else will or dare. His providence shall order things so as shall be for comfort to you; he shall appear *for your joy* and for the confusion of those that abuse you and trample on you; *they shall be ashamed* of their enmity to you.” This was fulfilled when, upon the signals given of Jerusalem's approaching ruin, the *Jews' hearts failed them for fear*; but the disciples of Christ, whom they had hated and persecuted, *lifted up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh*, ^{<2125>}Luke 21:26, 28. Though God seem to hide himself, he will in due time show himself.

II. Let them know that God's appearances for them will be such as will make a great noise in the world (v. 6): There shall be *a voice of noise from the city, from the temple*. Some make it the joyful and triumphant voice of the church's friends, others the frightful lamenting voice of her enemies, surprised in the city, and fleeing in vain to the temple for shelter. These voices do but echo to the *voice of the Lord*, who is now rendering a

*recompence to his enemies; and those that will not hear him speaking this terror shall hear them returning the alarms of it in doleful shrieks. We may well think what a confused noise there was in the city and temple when Jerusalem, after a long siege, was at last taken by the Romans. Some think this prophecy was fulfilled in the prodigies that went before that destruction of Jerusalem, related by Josephus in his *History of the Wars of the Jews* (4.388 and 6.311), that the temple-doors flew open suddenly of their own accord, and the priests heard a noise of motion or shifting in the most holy place, and presently a voice, saying, *Let us depart hence*. And, some time after, one Jesus Bar-Annas went up and down the city, at the feast of tabernacles, continually crying, *A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the temple, a voice against all this people*.*

III. Let them know that God will set up a church for himself in the world, which shall be abundantly replenished in a little time (v. 7): *Before she travailed she brought forth*. This is to be applied in the type to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, which was brought about very easily and silently, without any pain or struggle, such as was when they were brought out of Egypt; that was done *by might and power* (^{<RB>}Deuteronomy 4:34), but this by *the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, ^{<RB>}Zechariah 4:6. The man-child of the deliverance is rejoiced in, and yet the mother was never in labour for it; *before her pain came she was delivered*. This is altogether surprising, uncommon, and without precedent, unless in the story which the Egyptian midwives told of the Hebrew women (^{<RB>}Exodus 1:19), that *they were lively and were delivered ere the midwives came in unto them*. But *shall the earth be made to bring forth her fruits in one day?* No, it is the work of some weeks in the spring to *renew the face of the earth* and cover it with its products. Some read this to the same purport with the next clause, *Shall a land be brought forth in one day, or shall a nation be born at once?* Is it to be imagined that a woman at one birth should bring children sufficient to people a country and that they should in an instant grow up to maturity? No; something like this was done in the creation; but God has since rested from all such works, and leaves second causes to produce their effects gradually. *Nihil facit per saltum — He does nothing abruptly*. Yet, in this case, *as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth*. Cyrus's proclamation was no sooner issued out than the captives were formed into a body and were ready to make the best of their way to their own land. And the reason is given (v.

9), because *it is the Lord's doing; he* undertakes it whose work is perfect. If he *bring to the birth* in preparing his people for deliverance, he will *cause to bring forth* in the accomplishment of the deliverance. When every thing is ripe and ready for their release, and the number of their months is accomplished, so that *the children are brought to the birth*, shall not I then *give strength to bring forth*, but leave mother and babe to perish together in the most miserable case? How will this agree with the divine pity? Shall I begin a work and not go through with it? How will that agree with the divine power and perfection? *Am I he that causes to bring forth* (so the following clause may be read) *and shall I restrain her*? Does God cause mankind, and all the species of living creatures, to propagate, and *replenish the earth*, and *will he restrain Zion*? Will he not make her fruitful in a blessed offspring to replenish the church? Or, *Am I he that begat, and should I restrain from bringing forth*? Did God beget the deliverance in his purpose and promise, and will he not bring it forth in the accomplishment and performance of it? But this was a figure of the setting up of the Christian church in the world, and the replenishing of that family with children which was to be named from Jesus Christ. When the Spirit was poured out, and the gospel went forth from Zion, multitudes were converted in a little time and with little pains compared with the vast product. The apostles, even before they travailed, brought forth, and the children born to Christ were so numerous, and so suddenly and easily produced, that they were rather like the dew from the morning's womb than like the son from the mother's womb, ~~EB08~~ Psalm 110:3. The success of the gospel was astonishing; that light, like the morning, strangely diffused itself till it took hold even of *the ends of the earth*. Cities and nations were born at once to Christ. The same day that the Spirit was poured out there were 3000 souls added to the church. And, when this glorious work was once begun, it was carried on wonderfully, beyond what could be imagined, *so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed*. He that brought to the birth in conviction of sin caused to bring forth in a thorough conversion to God.

IV. Let them know that their present sorrows shall shortly be turned into abundant joys, v. 10, 11. Observe,

1. How the church's friends are described; they are such as *love her, and mourn* with her and *for her*. Note, All that love God love Jerusalem; they love the church of God, and lay its interest very near their heart. They admire the beauty of the church, take pleasure in communion with it, and

heartily espouse its cause. And those that have a sincere affection for the church have a cordial sympathy with her in all the cares and sorrows of her militant state. They mourn for her; all her grievances are their griefs; if Jerusalem be in distress, their harps are hung on the willow-trees.

2. How they are encouraged: *Rejoice with her*, and again and again *I say, Rejoice*. This intimates that Jerusalem shall have cause to rejoice; the days of her mourning shall be at an end, and she shall be comforted according to the time that she has been afflicted. It is the will of God that all her friends should join with her in her joys, for they shall share with her in those blessings that will be the matter of her joy. If *we suffer with Christ* and sorrow with his church, *we shall reign with him* and rejoice with her. We are here called,

(1.) To bear our part in the church's praises: "Come, *rejoice with her, rejoice for joy with her*, rejoice greatly, rejoice and know why you rejoice, rejoice on the days appointed for public thanksgiving. You that mourned for her in her sorrows cannot but from the same principle rejoice with her in her joys."

(2.) To take our part in the church's comforts. We must *suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation*. The word of God, the covenant of grace (especially the promises of that covenant), the ordinances of God, and all the opportunities of attending on him and conversing with him, are the breasts, which the church calls and counts the *breasts of her consolations*, where her comforts are laid up, and whence by faith and prayer they are drawn. With her therefore we must suck from these breasts, by an application of the promises of God to ourselves and a diligent attendance on his ordinances; and with the consolations which are drawn hence we must be satisfied, and not be dissatisfied though we have ever so little of earthly comforts. It is the glory of the church that she has the Lord for her God, that to her *pertain the adoption and the service of God*; and with *the abundance of this glory* we must be *delighted*. We must take more pleasure in our relation to God and communion with him than in all the delights of the sons and daughters of men. Whatever is the glory of the church must be *our glory and joy*, particularly her purity, unity, and increase.

V. Let them know that he who gives them this call to rejoice will give them cause to do so and hearts to do so, v. 12-14.

1. He will give them cause to do so. For,

(1.) They shall enjoy a long uninterrupted course of prosperity: *I will extend, or am extending, peace to her* (that is, all good to her) *like a river* that runs in a constant stream, still increasing till it be swallowed up in the ocean. The gospel brings with it, wherever it is received in its power, such peace as this, which shall go on *like a river*, supplying souls with all good and making them fruitful, as a river does the lands it passes through, such a *river of peace* as the springs of the world's comforts cannot send forth and the dams of the world's troubles cannot stop nor drive back nor its sand rack up, such a river of peace as will carry us to the ocean of boundless and endless bliss.

(2.) There shall be large and advantageous additions made to them: *The glory of the Gentiles shall come to them like a flowing stream*. Gentiles converts shall come pouring into the church, and swell the river of her peace and prosperity; for they shall *bring their glory* with them; their wealth and honour, their power and interest, shall all be devoted to the service of God and employed for the good of the church: “*Then shall you suck from the breasts of her consolations*. When you see such crowding for a share in those comforts you shall be the more solicitous and the more vigorous to secure your share, not for fear of having the less for others coming in to partake of Christ” (there is no danger of that; he has enough for all and enough for each), “*but their zeal shall provoke you to a holy jealousy*.” It is well when it does so, ⁶¹¹⁴Romans 11:14; ⁴⁹⁹²2 Corinthians 9:2.

(3.) God shall be glorified in all, and that ought to be more the matter of our joy than any thing else (v. 14): *The hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants*, the protecting supporting hand of his almighty power, the supplying enriching hand of his inexhaustible goodness; the benefit which his servants have by both these *shall be known* to his glory as well as theirs. And, to make this the more illustrious, he will at the same time make known *his indignation towards his enemies*. God's mercy and justice shall both be manifested and for ever magnified

2. God will not only give them cause to rejoice, but will speak comfort to them, will speak it *to their hearts*; and it is he only that can do that, and make it fasten there. See what he will do for the comfort of all the sons of Zion.

(1.) Their country shall be their tender nurse: You shall be *carried on her sides*, under her arms, as little children are, and shall be *dangled upon her knees*, as darlings are, especially when they are weary and out of humour, and must be got to sleep. Those that are joined to the church must be treated thus affectionately. The great Shepherd *gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom*, and so must the under-shepherds, that they may not be discouraged. Proselytes should be favourites.

(2.) God will himself be their powerful comforter: *As one whom his mother comforts*, when he is sick or sore, or upon any account in sorrow, *so will I comfort you*; not only with the rational arguments which a prudent father uses, but with the tender affections and compassions of a loving mother, that bemoans her afflicted child when it has fallen and hurt itself, that she may quiet it and make it easy, or endeavours to pacify it after she has chidden it and fallen out with it (^{287D}Jeremiah 31:20): *Since I spoke against him, my bowels are troubled for him*; he is a dear son, he is a pleasant child. Thus the mother comforts. Thus *you shall be comforted in Jerusalem*, in the favours bestowed on the church, which you shall partake of, and in the thanksgivings offered by the church, which you shall concur with.

(3.) They shall feel the blessed effects of this comfort in their own souls (v. 13): *When you see this*, what a happy state the church is restored to, not only your tongues and your countenances, but *your hearts shall rejoice*. This was fulfilled in the wonderful satisfaction which Christ's disciples had in the success of their ministry. Christ, with an eye to that, tells them (^{492D}John 16:22), *Your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man taketh from you*. Then *your bones*, that were dried and withered (the marrow of them quite exhausted), shall recover a youthful strength and vigour and *shall flourish like a herb*. Divine comforts reach the inward man; *they are marrow* and moistening to the bones, (^{208B}Proverbs 3:8. The bones are the strength of the body; those shall be made to flourish with these comforts. *The joy of the Lord will be your strength*, (^{468D}Nehemiah 8:10.

THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE CHURCH

These verses, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a dark side towards the enemies of God's kingdom and all that are rebels against his crown, and a bright side towards his faithful loyal subjects. Probably they refer to the Jews in captivity in Babylon, of whom some are said to have been sent thither for their hurt, and with them God here threatens to proceed in his controversy; they hated to be reformed, and therefore should be ruined by the calamity (~~2249~~ Jeremiah 24:9); others were sent thither for their good, and they should have the trouble sanctified to them, should in due time get well through it and see many a good day after it. Many of the expressions here used are accommodated to that glorious dispensation; but doubtless the prophecy looks further, to the judgment for which Christ did come once, and will come again, into this world, and to the distinction which his word in both makes *between the precious and the vile*.

I. Christ will appear to the confusion and terror of all those that stand it out against him. Sometimes he will appear in temporal judgments. The Jews that persisted in infidelity were cut off *by fire* and *by his sword*. The ruin was very extensive; *the Lord* then *pleaded with all flesh*; and, it being his sword with which they are cut off, they are called *his slain*, sacrificed to his justice, and they *shall be many*. In the great day the wrath of God will be his fire and sword, with which he will cut off and consume all the impenitent; and his word, when it takes hold of sinners' consciences, burns like fire, and is sharper *than any two-edged sword*. Idolaters will especially be contended with in the day of wrath, v. 17. Perhaps some of those who returned out of Babylon retained such instances of idolatry and superstition as are here mentioned, had their *idols in their gardens* (not daring to set them up publicly in the high places) and there *purified themselves* (as the worshippers of the true God used to do) when they went about their idolatrous rites, *one after another*, or, as we read it, *behind one tree in the midst*, behind *Ahad* or *Ehad*, some idol that they worshipped by that name and in honour of which they *ate swine's flesh* (which was expressly forbidden by the law of God), *and other abominations*, as *the mouse*, or some other like animal. But the prophecy may refer to all those judgments which the wrath of God, according to the word of God, will bring upon provoking sinners, that live in contempt of God and are

devoted to the world and the flesh: They *shall be consumed together*. From the happiness of heaven we find expressly excluded all *idolaters, and whosoever worketh abomination*, ^{<612>}Revelation 21:27; 22:15. In the day of vengeance secret wickedness will be brought to light and brought to the account; for (v. 18), *I know their works and their thoughts*. God knows both what men do and from what principle and with what design they do it; and therefore is fit to judge the world, because he can *judge the secrets of men*, ^{<616>}Romans 2:16.

II. He will appear to the comfort and joy of all that are faithful to him in the setting up of his kingdom in this world, the kingdom of grace, the earnest and first-fruits of the kingdom of glory. The time shall come that he will *gather all nations and tongues to himself*, that they may *come and see his glory* as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, v. 18. This was fulfilled when all nations were to be discipled and the gift of tongues was bestowed in order thereunto. The church had hitherto been confined to one nation and in one tongue only God was worshipped; but in the days of the Messiah the partition-wall should be taken down, and those that had been strangers to God should be brought acquainted with him and should *see his glory* in the gospel, as the Jews had seen it *in the sanctuary*. As to this, it is here promised,

1. That some of the Jewish nation should, by the grace of God, be distinguished from the rest, and marked for salvation: I will not only set up a *gathering ensign* among them, to which the Gentiles shall seek (as is promised, ^{<2412>}Isaiah 11:12), but there shall be those among them on whom *I will set a differencing sign*; for so the word signifies. Though they are a corrupt degenerate nation, yet God will set apart a remnant of them, that shall be devoted to him and employed for him, and a mark shall be set upon them, with such certainty will God own them, ^{<2404>}Ezekiel 9:4. The *servants of God* shall be *sealed in their foreheads*, ^{<617>}Revelation 7:3. The Lord knows those that are his. Christ's sheep are marked.

2. That those who are themselves distinguished thus by the grace of God shall be commissioned to invite others to come and take the benefit of that grace. Those that escape the power of those prejudices by which the generality of that nation is kept in unbelief shall be *sent to the nations* to carry the gospel among them, and preach it to every creature. Note, Those who themselves have escaped the wrath to come should do all they can to snatch others also as brands out of the burning. God chooses to send those

on his errands that can deliver their message feelingly and experimentally, and warn people of their danger by sin as those who have themselves narrowly escaped the danger.

(1.) They shall be sent *to the nations*, several of which are here named, Tarshish, and Pul, and Lud, etc. It is uncertain, nor are interpreters agreed, what countries are here intended. *Tarshish* signifies in general *the sea*, yet some take it for Tarsus in Cilicia. *Pul* is mentioned sometimes as the name of one of the kings of Assyria; perhaps some part of that country might likewise bear that name. *Lud* is supposed to be Lydia, a warlike nation, famed for archers: the Lydians are said to *handle and bend the bow*, ^{<449>}Jeremiah 46:9. *Tubal*, some think, is Italy or Spain; and *Javan* most agree to be Greece, the Iones; and the *isles of the Gentiles*, that were peopled by the posterity of Japhet (^{<1105>}Genesis 10:5), probably are here meant by the *isles afar off, that have not heard my name, neither have seen my glory*. In Judah only was God known, and there only his name was great for many ages. Other countries sat in darkness, heard no the joyful sound, saw not the joyful light. This deplorable state of theirs seems to be spoken of here with compassion; for it is a pity that any of the children of men should be at such a distance from their Maker as not to hear his name and see his glory. In consideration of this,

(2.) Those that are sent to the nations shall go upon God's errand, to *declare his glory among the Gentiles*. The Jews that shall be dispersed among the nations shall declare the glory of God's providence concerning their nation all along, by which many shall be invited to join with them, as also by the appearances of God's glory among them in his ordinances. Some out of all languages of the nations shall *take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew*, entreating him to take notice of them, to admit them into his company, and to stay a little while for them, till they are ready, "for *we will go with you, having heard that God is with you,*" ^{<303>}Zechariah 8:23. Thus the glory of God was in part declared among the Gentiles; but more clearly and fully by the apostles and early preachers of the gospel, who were sent into all the world, even to the isles afar off, to publish the glorious gospel of the blessed God. They *went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them,* ^{<4152>}Mark 16:20.

3. That many converts shall hereby be made, v. 20.

(1.) *They shall bring all your brethren* (for proselytes ought to be owned and embraced as brethren) *for an offering unto the Lord*. God's glory shall

not be in vain declared to them, but they shall be both invited and directed to join themselves to the Lord. Those that are sent to them shall succeed so well in their negotiation that thereupon there shall be as great flocking to Jerusalem as used to be at the time of a solemn feast, when all the males from all parts of the country were to attend there, and not to appear empty. Observe,

[1.] The conveniences that they shall be furnished with for their coming. Some shall come *upon horses*, because they came from far and the journey was too long to travel on foot, as the Jews usually did to their feasts. Persons of quality shall come *in chariots*, and the aged, and sickly, and little children, shall be brought *in litters* or covered wagons, and the young men *on mules and swift beasts*. This intimates their zeal and forwardness to come. They shall spare no trouble nor charge to get to Jerusalem. Those that cannot ride on horseback shall come in litters; and in such haste shall they be, and so impatient of delay, that those that can shall ride upon mules and swift beasts. These expressions are figurative, and these various means of conveyance are heaped up to intimate (says the learned Mr. Gataker) the abundant provision of all those gracious helps requisite for the bringing of God's elect home to Christ. All shall be welcome, and nothing shall be wanting for their assistance and encouragement.

[2.] The character under which they shall be brought. They shall come, not as formerly they used to come to Jerusalem, to be offerers, but to be themselves *an offering unto the Lord*, which must be understood spiritually, of their being presented to God as *living sacrifices*, ^{<511>}Romans 12:1. The apostle explains this, and perhaps refers to it, ^{<516>}Romans 15:16, where he speaks of his *ministering the gospel to the Gentiles*, that the *offering up, or sacrificing, of the Gentiles might be acceptable*. They shall offer themselves, and those who are the instruments of their conversion shall offer them, as the spoils which they have taken for Christ and which are devoted to his service and honour. They shall be brought *as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel*, with great care that they be holy, purified from sin, and sanctified to God. It is said of the converted Gentiles (^{<415>}Acts 15:9) that *their hearts were purified by faith*. Whatever was brought to God was brought in a clean vessel, a vessel appropriated to religious uses. God will be served and honoured in the way that he has appointed, in the ordinances of his own institution, which are the proper vehicles for these spiritual offerings. When the soul is offered up to God the body must be a clean vessel for it, possessed *in*

sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness (^{<504>}1 Thessalonians 4:4, 5); and converts to Christ are not only *purged from an evil conscience*, but have their *bodies also washed with pure water*, ^{<502>}Hebrews 10:22. Now,

(2.) This may refer,

[1.] To the Jews, devout men, and proselytes out of every nation under heaven, that flocked together to Jerusalem, expecting the kingdom of the Messiah to appear, ^{<425>}Acts 2:5, 6, 10. They came from all parts to the *holy mountain of Jerusalem*, as an *offering to the Lord*, and there many of them were brought to the faith of Christ by the gift of tongues poured out on the apostles. Methinks there is some correspondence between that history and this prophecy. The eunuch some time after came to worship at Jerusalem in his chariot and took home with him the knowledge of Christ and his holy religion.

[2.] To the Gentiles, some of all nations, that should be converted to Christ, and so added to his church, which, though a spiritual accession, is often in prophecy represented by a local motion. The apostle says of all true Christians that they *have come to Mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem* (^{<502>}Hebrews 12:22), which explains this passage, and shows that the meaning of all this parade is only that they shall be brought into the church by the grace of God, and in the use of the means of that grace, as carefully, safely, and comfortably, as if they were carried in chariots and litters. Thus God shall *persuade Japhet* and he shall *dwell in the tents of Shem*, ^{<092>}Genesis 9:27.

4. That a gospel ministry shall be set up in the church, it being thus enlarged by the addition of such a multitude of members to it (v. 21): *I will take of them* (of the proselytes, of the Gentile converts) *for priests and for Levites*, to minister in holy things and to preside in their religious assemblies, which is very necessary for doctrine, worship, and discipline. Hitherto the priests and Levites were all taken from among the Jews and were all of one tribe; but in gospel times God will take of the converted Gentiles to minister to him in holy things, to teach the people, to bless them in the name of the Lord, to be the stewards of the mysteries of God as the priests and Levites were under the law, to be pastors and teachers (or bishops), to *give themselves to the word and prayer*, and deacons to *serve tables*, and, as the Levites, to take care of the *outward business of the house of God*, ^{<501>}Philippians 1:1; ^{<462>}Acts 6:2-4. The apostles were all

Jews, and so were the seventy disciples; the great apostle of the Gentiles was himself *a Hebrew of the Hebrews*; but, when churches were planted among the Gentiles, they had ministers settled who were *of themselves, elders in every church* (⁴⁴⁰³Acts 14:23, ⁵⁰¹⁵Titus 1:5), which made the ministry to spread the more easily, and to be the more familiar, and, if not the more venerable, yet the more acceptable; gospel grace, it might be hoped, would cure people of those corruptions which kept a prophet from having *honour in his own country*. God says, *I will take, not all of them, though they are all in a spiritual sense made to our God kings and priests, but of them, some of them*. It is God's work originally to choose ministers by qualifying them for and inclining them to the service, as well as to make ministers by giving them their commission. *I will take them*, that is, I will admit them, though Gentiles, and will accept of them and their ministrations. This is a great honour and advantage to the Gentile church, as it was to the Jewish church that God *raised up of their sons for prophets and their young men for Nazarites*, ³⁰²¹Amos 2:11.

5. That the church and ministry, being thus settled, shall continue and be kept up in a succession from one generation to another, v. 22. The change that will be made by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah is here described to be,

(1.) A very great and universal change; it shall be a new world, *the new heavens and the new earth* promised before, ²⁵⁷⁷Isaiah 65:17. *Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new* (⁴⁰⁵⁷2 Corinthians 5:17), the old covenant of peculiarity is set aside, and a new covenant, a covenant of grace, established, ⁵⁰⁸³Hebrews 8:13. We are now to serve *in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter*, ⁴¹⁷⁶Romans 7:6. New commandments are given relating both to heaven and earth, and new promises relating to both, and both together make a New Testament; so that they are new heavens and a new earth that God will create, and these a preparative for the new heavens and new earth designed at the end of time, ⁶⁰⁸³2 Peter 3:13.

(2.) A change of God's own making; he will create the new heavens and the new earth. The change was made by him that had authority to make new ordinances, as well as power to make new worlds.

(3.) It will be an abiding lasting change, a change never to be changed, a new world that will be always new, and never wax old, as that does which is ready to vanish away: *It shall remain before me* unalterable; for the

gospel dispensation is to continue to the end of time and not to be succeeded by any other. The kingdom of Christ is a *kingdom that cannot be moved*; the laws and privileges of it *are things that cannot be shaken*, but shall *for ever remain*, ~~§1027~~ Hebrews 12:27, 28. It shall *therefore remain*, because it is before God; it is under his eye, and care, and special protection.

(4.) It will be maintained in a seed that shall serve Christ: *Your seed*, and in them *your name, shall remain* — a seed of ministers, a seed of Christians; as one generation of both passes away, another generation shall come; and thus the name of Christ, with that of Christians, shall continue on earth while the earth remains, and his throne as the days of heaven. The gates of hell, though they fight against the church, shall not *prevail*, nor *wear out the saints of the Most High*.

6. That the public worship of God in religious assemblies shall be carefully and constantly attended upon by all that are thus brought *as an offering to the Lord*, v. 23. This is described in expressions suited to the Old-Testament dispensation, to show that though the ceremonial law should be abolished, and the temple service should come to an end, yet God should be still as regularly, constantly, and acceptably worshipped as ever. Heretofore only Jews went up to appear before God, and they were bound to attend only three times a year, and the males only; but now all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, women as well as men, shall *come and worship before God*, in his presence, though not in his temple at Jerusalem, but in religious assemblies dispersed all the world over, which shall be to them as the tabernacle of meeting was to the Jews. God will in them record his name, and, though but two or three come together, he will be among them, will meet them, and bless them. And they shall have the benefit of these holy convocations frequently, every new moon and every sabbath, not, as formerly, at the three annual feasts only. There is no necessity of one certain place, as the temple was of old. Christ is our temple, in whom by faith all believers meet, and now that the church is so far extended it is impossible that all should meet at one place; but it is fit that there should be a certain time appointed, that the service may be done certainly and frequently, and a token thereby given of the spiritual communion which all Christian assemblies have with each other by faith, hope, and holy love. The *new moons* and the *sabbaths* are mentioned because, under the law, though the yearly feasts were to be celebrated at Jerusalem, yet the new moons and the sabbaths were religiously observed

all the country over, in the *schools of the prophets* first and afterwards in the *synagogues* (~~1003~~ 2 Kings 4:23, ~~1005~~ Amos 8:5, ~~4151~~ Acts 15:21), according to the model of which Christian assemblies seem to be formed. Where the Lord's day is weekly sanctified, and the Lord's supper monthly celebrated, and both are duly attended on, there this promise is fulfilled, there the Christian new moons and sabbaths are observed. See, here,

(1.) That God is to be worshipped in solemn assemblies, and that it is the duty of all, as they have opportunity, to wait upon God in those assemblies: *All flesh must come*; though flesh, weak, corrupt, and sinful, let them come that the flesh may be mortified.

(2.) In worshipping God we present ourselves before him, and are in a special manner in his presence.

(3.) For doing this there ought to be stated times, and are so; and we must see that it is our interest as well as our duty constantly and conscientiously to observe these times.

7. That their thankful sense of God's distinguishing favour to them should be very much increased by the consideration of the fearful doom and destruction of those that persist and perish in their infidelity and impiety, v. 24. Those that have been worshipping the Lord of hosts, and rejoicing before him in the goodness of his house, shall, in order to affect themselves the more with their own happiness, take a view of the misery of the wicked. Observe,

(1.) Who they are whose misery is here described. They are men that have *transgressed against God*, not only broken his laws, but broken covenant with him, and thought themselves able to contend with him. It may be meant especially of the unbelieving Jews that rejected the gospel of Christ.

(2.) What their misery is. It is here represented by the frightful spectacle of a field of battle, covered with the *carcasses* of the slain, that lie rotting above ground, full of *worms* crawling about them and feeding on them; and, if you go to burn them, they are so scattered, and it is such a noisome piece of work to get them together, that it would be endless, and the *fire would never be quenched*; so that they are an *abhorring to all flesh*, nobody cares to come near them. Now this is sometimes accomplished in temporal judgments, and perhaps never nearer the letter than in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, in which

destruction it is computed that above two millions, first and last, were cut off by the sword, besides what perished by famine and pestilence. It may refer likewise to the spiritual judgments that came upon the unbelieving Jews, which St. Paul looks upon, and shows us, ^{<5118>}Romans 11:8, etc. They became dead in sins, twice dead. The church of the Jews was a *carcase* of a church; all its members were putrid carcases; *their worm died not*, their own consciences made them continually uneasy, and the fire of their rage against the gospel was not quenched, which was their punishment as well as their sin; and they became, more than ever any nation under the sun, *an abhorring to all flesh*. But our Saviour applies it to the everlasting misery and torment of impenitent sinners in the future state, where their *worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched* (^{<4094>}Mark 9:44); for the soul, whose conscience is its constant tormentor, is immortal, and God, whose wrath is its constant terror, is eternal.

(3.) What notice shall be taken of it. Those that worship God shall *go forth and look upon them*, to affect their own hearts with the love of their Redeemer, when they see what misery they are redeemed from. As it will aggravate the miseries of the damned to see others in the kingdom of heaven and *themselves thrust out* (^{<4038>}Luke 13:28), so it will illustrate the joys and glories of the blessed to see what becomes of those that died in their transgression, and it will elevate their praises to think that they were themselves as brands plucked out of that burning. To the honour of that free grace which thus distinguished them let the redeemed of the Lord with all humility, and not without a holy trembling, sing their triumphant songs.