

CHAPTER 25

After the threatenings of wrath in the foregoing chapter we have here,

I. Thankful praises for what God had done, which the prophet, in the name of the church, offers up to God, and teaches us to offer the like (v. 1-5).

II. Precious promises of what God would yet further do for his church, especially in the grace of the gospel (v. 6-8).

III. The church's triumph in God over her enemies thereupon (v. 9-12). This chapter looks as pleasantly upon the church as the former looked dreadfully upon the world.

ISAIAH 25:1-5

A SONG OF PRAISE

It is said in the close of the foregoing chapter that the *Lord of hosts shall reign gloriously*; now, in compliance with this, the prophet here speaks of *the glorious majesty of his kingdom* (⁴⁵¹²Psalm 145:12), and gives him the glory of it; and, however this prophecy might have an accomplishment in the destruction of Babylon and the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity there, it seems to look further, to the praises that should be offered up to God by the gospel church for Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies and the comforts he has provided for all believers. Here,

I. The prophet determines to praise God himself; for those that would stir up others should in the first place stir up themselves to praise God (v. 1): "*O Lord! thou art my God, a God in covenant with me.*" When God is punishing *the kings of the earth upon the earth*, and making them to tremble before him, a poor prophet can go to him, and, with a humble boldness, say, *O Lord! thou art my God*, and therefore *I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name*. Those that have the Lord for their God are bound to praise him; for *therefore* he took us to be his people *that we might be unto him for a name and for a praise*, ²⁴⁵¹Jeremiah 13:11. In praising God we

exalt him; not that we can make him higher than he is, but we must make him to appear to ourselves and others than he does. See ^{<D83>}Exodus 15:2.

II. He pleases himself with the thought that others also shall be brought to praise God, v. 3. “*Therefore, because of the desolations thou hast made in the earth by thy providence* (^{<D83>}Psalm 46:8) and the just vengeance thou hast taken on thy and thy church's enemies, *therefore shall the strong people glorify thee in concert, and the city (the metropolis) of the terrible nations fear thee.*” This may be understood,

1. Of those people that have been strong and terrible against God. Those that have been enemies to God's kingdom, and have fought against the interests of it with a great deal of strength and terror, shall either be converted, and glorify God by joining with his people in his service, or at least convinced, so as to own themselves conquered. Those that have been the terror of the mighty shall be forced to tremble before the judgments of God and call in vain to rocks and mountains to hide them. Or,

2. Of those that shall be now made strong and terrible for God and by him, though before they were weak and trampled upon. God shall so visibly appear for and with those that fear him and glorify him that all shall acknowledge them a strong people and shall stand in awe of them. There was a time when *many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them* (^{<D83>}Esther 8:17), and when those that knew their God were strong and did exploits (^{<D83>}Daniel 11:32), for which they glorified God.

III. He observes what is, and ought to be, the matter of this praise. We and others must exalt God and praise him; for,

1. He has done wonders, according to the counsel of his own will, v. 1. We exalt God by admiring what he has done as truly wonderful, wonderful proofs of his power beyond what any creature could perform, and wonderful proofs of his goodness beyond what such sinful creatures as we are could expect. These *wonderful things*, which are new and surprising to us, and altogether unthought of, are according to his *counsels of old*, devised by his wisdom and designed for his own glory and the comfort of his people. All the operations of providence are according to God's eternal counsels (and those faithfulness and truth itself), all consonant to his attributes, consistent with one another, and sure to be accomplished in their season.

2. He has in particular humbled the pride, and broken the power, of the mighty ones of the earth (v. 2): “*Thou hast made of a city, of many a city, a heap of rubbish. Of many a defenced city, that thought itself well guarded by nature and art, and the multitude and courage of its militia, thou hast made a ruin.*” What created strength can hold out against Omnipotence? “Many a city so richly built that it might be called a *palace*, and so much frequented and visited by persons of the best rank from all parts that it might be called a *palace of strangers*, thou hast made to be no city; it is levelled with the ground, and not one stone left upon another, and it shall never be built again.” This has been the case of many cities in divers parts of the world, and in our own nation particularly; cities that flourished once have gone to decay and are lost, and it is scarcely known (except by urns or coins digged up out of the earth) where they stood. How many of the cities of Israel have long since been heaps and ruins! God hereby teaches us that *here we have no continuing city* and must therefore seek one to come which will never be a ruin or go to decay.

3. He has seasonably relieved and succoured his necessitous and distressed people (v. 4): *Thou has been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy.* As God weakens the strong that are proud and secure, so he strengthens the weak that are humble and serious, and stay themselves upon him. Nay, he not only makes them strong, but he is himself their strength; for in him they strengthen themselves, and it is his favour that is the *strength of their hearts*. He is a *strength to the needy in his distress*, when he needs strength, and when his distress drives him to God. And, as he strengthens them against their inward decays, so he shelters them from outward assaults. He is a *refuge from the storm* of rain or hail, and a *shadow from the scorching heat* of the sun in summer. God is a sufficient protection to his people in all weathers, hot and cold, wet and dry. The armour of righteousness serves both *on the right hand and on the left*, ² Corinthians 6:7. Whatever dangers or troubles God's people may be in, effectual care is taken that they shall sustain no real hurt or damage. When perils are most threatening and alarming God will then appear for the safety of his people: *When the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall*, which makes a great noise, but cannot overthrow the wall. The enemies of God's poor are terrible ones; they do all they can to make themselves so to them. Their rage is like a blast of wind, loud, and blustering, and furious; but, like the wind, it is under a divine check; for God *holds the winds in his fist*, and God will be such a shelter to his

people that they shall be able to stand the shock, keep their ground, and maintain their integrity and peace. A storm beating on a ship tosses it, but that which beats on a wall never stirs it, ^{<970>}Psalm 76:10; 138:7.

4. That he does and will shelter those that trust in him from the insolence of their proud oppressors (v. 5): *Thou shalt*, or thou dost, *bring down the noise of strangers*; thou shalt abate and still it, as *the heat in a dry place* is abated and moderated *by the shadow of a cloud* interposing. *The branch*, or rather the son or triumph, *of the terrible ones shall be brought low*, and they shall be made to change their note and lower their voice. Observe here,

(1.) The oppressors of God's people are called *strangers*; for they forget that those they oppress are made of the same mould, of the same blood, with them. They are called *terrible ones*; for so they affect to be, rather than amiable ones: they would rather be feared than loved.

(2.) Their insolence towards the people of God is noisy and hot, and that is all; it is but the noise of strangers, who think to carry their point by hectoring and bullying all that stand in their way, and talking big. *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise*, ^{<2447>}Jeremiah 46:17. It is like the heat of the sun scorching in the middle of the day; but where is it when the sun has set?

(3.) Their noise, and heat, and all their triumph, will be humbled and brought low, when their hopes are baffled and all their honours laid in the dust. The branches, even the top branches, of the terrible ones, will be broken off, and thrown to the dunghill.

(4.) If the labourers in God's vineyard be at any time called to *bear the burden and heat of the day*, he will find some way or other to refresh them, as with the shadow of a cloud, that they may not be pressed above measure.

^{<2316>}ISAIAH 25:6-8

THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

If we suppose (as many do) that this refers to the great joy which there should be in Zion and Jerusalem when the army of the Assyrians was

routed by an angel, or when the Jews were released out of their captivity in Babylon, or upon occasion of some other equally surprising deliverance, yet we cannot avoid making it to look further, to the grace of the gospel and the glory which is the crown and consummation of that grace; for it is at our resurrection through Christ that the saying here written *shall be brought to pass*; then, and not till then (if we may believe St. Paul), it shall have its full accomplishment: *Death is swallowed up in victory*, ^{<435>}1 Corinthians 15:54. This is a key to the rest of the promises here connected together. And so we have here a prophecy of the salvation and the grace brought unto us by Jesus Christ, into which *the prophets enquired and searched diligently*, ^{<400>}1 Peter 1:10.

I. That the grace of the gospel should be a royal feast for all people; not like that of Ahasuerus, which was intended only to show the grandeur of the master of the feast (^{<400>}Esther 1:4); for this is intended to gratify the guests, and therefore, whereas all *there* was for show, all *here* is for substance. The preparations made in the gospel for the kind reception of penitents and supplicants with God are often in the New Testament set forth by the similitude of *a feast*, as ^{<420>}Matthew 22:1, etc., which seems to be borrowed from this prophecy.

1. God himself is the Master of the feast, and we may be sure he prepares like himself, as becomes him to give, rather than as becomes us to receive. *The Lord of hosts* makes this feast.

2. The guests invited are *all people*, Gentiles as well as Jews. *Go preach the gospel to every creature*. There is enough for all, and whoever will may come, and partake freely, even those that are gathered out of the highways and the hedges.

3. The place is *Mount Zion*. Thence the preaching of the gospel takes rise: the preachers must begin at Jerusalem. The gospel church is the Jerusalem that is above; there this feast is made, and to it all the invited guests must go.

4. The provision is very rich, and every thing is of the best. It is a *feast*, which supposes abundance and variety; it is a continual feast to believers, it is their own fault if it be not. It is *a feast of fat things and full of marrow*; so relishing, so nourishing, are the comforts of the gospel to all those that feast upon them and digest them. The returning prodigal was entertained with the fatted calf; and David has that pleasure in communion

with God with which his soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness. It is a feast of wines on the lees, the strongest-bodied wines, that have been kept long upon the lees, and then are well refined from them, so that they are clear and fine. There is that in the gospel which, like wine soberly used, makes glad the heart and raises the spirits, and is fit for those that are of a heavy heart, being under convictions of sin and mourning for it, that they may drink and forget their misery (for that is the proper use of wine — it is a cordial for those that need it, ⁴¹⁸⁵Proverbs 31:5, 6), may be of good cheer, knowing that their sins are forgiven, and may be vigorous in their spiritual work and warfare, as a strong man refreshed with wine.

II. That the world should be freed from that darkness of ignorance and mistake in the mists of which it had been so long lost and buried (v. 7): *He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering* (the covering of the face) with which all people are covered (hood-winked or blind-folded) so that they cannot see their way nor go about their work, and by reason of which they wander endlessly. Their faces are covered as those of men condemned, or dead men. There is *a veil spread over all nations*, for they all sit in darkness; and no marvel, when the Jews themselves, among whom *God was known*, had a *veil upon their hearts*, ⁴¹⁸⁵2 Corinthians 3:15. But this veil the Lord will destroy, by the light of his gospel shining in the world, and the power of his Spirit opening men's eyes to receive it. He will raise those to spiritual life that have long been dead in trespasses and sins.

III. That death should be conquered, the power of it broken, and the property of it altered: *He will swallow up death in victory*, v. 8.

1. Christ will himself, in his resurrection, triumph over death, will break its bands, its bars, asunder, and cast away all its cords. The grave seemed to swallow him up, but really he swallowed it up.

2. The happiness of the saints shall be out of the reach of death, which puts a period to all the enjoyments of this world, embitters them, and stains the beauty of them.

3. Believers may triumph over death, and look upon it as a conquered enemy: *O death! where is thy sting?*

4. When the dead bodies of the saints shall be raised at the great day, and their mortality swallowed up of life, then death will be for ever swallowed up of victory; and it is the last enemy.

IV. That grief shall be banished, and there shall be perfect and endless joy: *The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.* Those that mourn for sin shall be comforted and have their consciences pacified. In the covenant of grace there shall be that provided which is sufficient to counterbalance all the sorrows of this present time, to wipe away our tears, and to refresh us. Those particularly that suffer for Christ shall have consolations abounding as their afflictions do abound. But in the joys of heaven, and nowhere short of them, will fully be *brought to pass this saying*, as that before, for there it is that God shall *wipe away all tears*, ~~(177)~~ Revelation 7:17; 21:4. And *there shall be no more sorrow*, because *there shall be no more death*. The hope of this should now wipe away all excessive tears, all the weeping that hinders sowing.

V. That all the reproach cast upon religion and the serious professors of it shall be for ever rolled away: *The rebuke of his people*, which they have long lain under, the calumnies and misrepresentations by which they have been blackened, the insolence and cruelty with which their persecutors have trampled on them and trodden them down, *shall be taken away*. Their righteousness shall be brought forth as the light, in the view of all the world, who shall be convinced that they are not such as they have been invidiously characterized; and so their salvation from the injuries done them as such shall be wrought out. Sometimes in this world God does that for his people which *takes away their reproach from among men*. However, it will be done effectually at the great day; for the *Lord has spoken it*, who can, and will, make it good. Let us patiently bear sorrow and shame now, and improve both; for shortly both will be done away.

~~(231)~~ ISAIAH 25:9-12

THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

Here is,

I. The welcome which the church shall give to these blessings promised in the foregoing verses (v. 9): *It shall be said in that day*, with a humble holy

triumph and exultation, *Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him!* Thus will the deliverance of the church out of long and sore troubles be celebrated; thus will it be as life from the dead. With such transports of joy and praise will those entertain the glad tidings of the Redeemer who looked for him, and for redemption in Jerusalem by him; and with such a triumphant song as this will glorified saints *enter into the joy of their Lord.*

1. God himself must have the glory of all: “*Lo, this is our God, this is the Lord.* This which is done is his doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Herein he has done like himself, has magnified his own wisdom, power, and goodness. Herein he has done for us like our God, a God in covenant with us, and whom we serve.” Note, Our triumphs must not terminate in what God does for us and gives to us, but must pass through them to himself, who is the author and giver of them: *This is our God.* Have any of the nations of the earth such a God to trust to? No, *their rock is not as our rock. There is none like unto the God of Jerusalem.*

2. The longer it has been expected the more welcome it is. “This is he whom we have waited for, in dependence upon his word of promise, and a full assurance that he would come in the set time, in due time, and therefore we were willing to tarry his time; and now we find it is not in vain to wait for him, for the mercy comes at last, with an abundant recompence for the delay.”

3. It is matter of joy unspeakable: “*We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.* We that share in the benefits of it will concur in the joyful thanksgivings for it.”

4. It is an encouragement to hope for the continuance and perfection of this salvation: *We have waited for him, and he will save us,* will carry on what he has begun; for *as for God, our God, his work is perfect.*

II. A prospect of further blessings for the securing and perpetuating of these.

1. The power of God shall be engaged for them and shall continue to take their part: *In this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest,* v. 10. The church and people of God shall have continued proofs of God's presence with them and residence among them: his hand shall be continually over

them, to protect and guard them, and continually stretched out to them, for their supply. Mount Zion is *his rest for ever*; here he will dwell.

2. The power of their enemies, which is engaged against them, shall be broken. *Moab* is here put for all the adversaries of God's people, that are vexatious to them; they *shall all be trodden down* or threshed (for *then* they beat out the corn by treading it) and shall be thrown out as *straw to the dunghill*, being good for nothing else. God having *caused his hand to rest upon this mountain*, it shall not be a hand that hangs down, or is folded up, feeble and inactive; but he shall *spread forth his hands, in the midst* of his people, *like one that swims*, which intimates that he will employ and exert his power for them vigorously, — that he will be doing for them on all sides, — that he will easily and effectually put by the opposition that is given to his gracious intentions for them, and thereby further and push forward his good work among them, — and that on their behalf he will be continually active, for so the swimmer is. It is foretold, particularly, what he shall do for them.

(1.) *He shall bring down the pride* of their enemies (and Moab was notoriously guilty of pride, ^{<2366>}Isaiah 16:6) by one humbling judgment after another, stripping them of that which they are proud of.

(2.) He shall bring down *the spoils of their hands*, shall take from them that which they have got by spoil and rapine. He shall bring down the arms of their hands, which are lifted up against God's Israel; he shall quite break their power, and disable them to do mischief.

(3.) He shall ruin all their fortifications, v. 12. Moab has his walls, and his high forts, with which he hopes to secure himself, and from which he designs to annoy the people of God; but God shall *bring them all down, lay them low, bring them to the ground, to the dust*; and so those who trusted to them will be left exposed. There is no fortress impregnable to Omnipotence, no fort so high but the arm of the Lord can overtop it and bring it down. This destruction of Moab is typical of Christ's victory over death (spoken of v. 8), his spoiling principalities and powers in his cross (^{<3025>}Colossians 2:15), his pulling down Satan's strong-holds by the preaching of his gospel (^{<4704>}2 Corinthians 10:4), and his reigning till all his enemies be *made his footstool*, ^{<1301>}Psalms 110:1.