

# CHAPTER 52

The greater part of this chapter is on the same subject with the chapter before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, which yet is applicable to the great salvation Christ has wrought out for us; but the last three verses are on the same subject with the following chapter, concerning the person of the Redeemer, his humiliation and exaltation. Observe,

- I.** The encouragement that is given to the Jews in captivity to hope that God would deliver them in his own way and time (v. 1-6).
- II.** The great joy and rejoicing that shall be both with ministers and people upon that occasion (v. 7-10).
- III.** The call given to those that remained in captivity to shift for their own enlargement when liberty was proclaimed (v. 11, 12).
- IV.** A short idea given here of the Messiah, which is enlarged upon in the next chapter (v. 13-15).

## ISAIAH 52:1-6

### ENCOURAGEMENT TO JERUSALEM

Here,

**I.** God's people are stirred up to appear vigorous for their own deliverance, v. 1, 2. They had desired that God would *awake* and *put on his strength*, <sup>2519</sup>Isaiah 51:9. Here he calls upon them to *awake* and *put on their strength*, to bestir themselves; let them awake from their despondency, and pluck up their spirits, encourage themselves and one another with the hope that all will be well yet, and no longer succumb and sink under their burden. Let them awake from their distrust, look above them, look about them, look into the promises, look into the providences of God that were working for them, and let them raise their expectations of great things from God. Let them awake from their dullness, sluggishness, and incogitancy, and raise up their endeavours, not to take any irregular

courses for their own relief, contrary to the law of nations concerning captives, but to use all likely means to recommend themselves to the favour of the conqueror and make an interest with him. God here gives them an assurance,

**1.** That they should be reformed by their captivity: *There shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean* (v. 1); their idolatrous customs should be no more introduced, or at least not harboured; for when by the marriage of strange wives, in Ezra's time and Nehemiah's, the unclean crept in, they were soon by the vigilance and zeal of the magistrates expelled again, and care was taken that Jerusalem should be a holy city. Thus the gospel Jerusalem is purified by the blood of Christ and the grace of God, and made indeed a holy city.

**2.** That they should be relieved and rescued out of their captivity, that the bands of their necks should be loosed, that they should not now be any longer oppressed, nay, that they should not be any more invaded, as they had been: *There shall no more come against thee* (so it may be read) *the uncircumcised and the clean*. The heathen shall not again enter into God's sanctuary and profane his temple, <sup><971></sup> Psalm 79:1. This must be understood with a condition. If they keep close to God, and keep in with him, God will keep off, will keep out of the enemy; but, if they again corrupt themselves, Antiochus will profane their temple and the Romans will destroy it. However, for some time they shall have peace. And to this happy change, now approaching, they are here called to accommodate themselves.

**(1.)** Let them prepare for joy: “*Put on thy beautiful garments*, no longer to appear in mourning weeds and the habit of thy widowhood. Put on a new face, a smiling countenance, now that a new and pleasant scene begins to open.” The beautiful garments were laid up then, when the harps were hung on the willow trees; but, now there is occasion for both, let both be resumed together. “Put on thy strength, and, in order to that, put on thy beautiful garments, in token of triumph and rejoicing.” Note, *The joy of the Lord will be our strength* (<sup><180></sup> Nehemiah 8:10), and our beautiful garments will serve for armour of proof against the darts of temptation and trouble. And observe, Jerusalem must put on her beautiful garments when she becomes a holy city, for the beauty of holiness is the most amiable beauty, and the more holy we are the more cause we have to rejoice.

(2.) Let them prepare for liberty: “*Shake thyself from the dust* in which thou hast lain, and into which thy proud oppressors have trodden thee (<sup><2812></sup>Isaiah 51:23), or into which thou hast in thy extreme sorrow rolled thyself.” *Arise, and set up*; so it may be read. “O Jerusalem! prepare to get clear of all the marks of servitude thou hast been under and to shift thy quarters: *Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck*; be inspired with generous principles and resolutions to assert thy own liberty.” The gospel proclaims liberty to those who were bound with fears and makes it their duty to take hold of their liberty. Let those who have been weary and heavily laden under the burden of sin, finding relief in Christ, shake themselves from the dust of their doubts and fears and loose themselves from those bands; for, *if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed*.

**II.** God stirs up himself to appear jealous for the deliverance of his people. He here pleads their cause with himself, and even stirs up himself to come and save them, for his reasons of mercy are fetched from himself. Several things he here considers.

1. That the Chaldeans who oppressed them never acknowledged God in the power they gained over his people, any more than Sennacherib did, who, when God made use of him as an instrument for the correction and reformation of his people, meant not so, (<sup><2816></sup>Isaiah 10:6, 7. “*You have sold yourselves for nought*; you got nothing by it, nor did I,” v. 3. (God considers that when they by sin had sold themselves he himself, who had the prior, nay, the sole, title to them, *did not increase his wealth by their price*, (<sup><2842></sup>Psalms 44:12. They did not so much as pay their debts to him with it; the Babylonians gave him no thanks for them, but rather reproached and blasphemed his name upon that account.) “And therefore they, having so long had you for nothing, shall at last restore you for nothing: *You shall be redeemed without price*,” as was promised, (<sup><2853></sup>Isaiah 45:13. Those that give nothing must expect to get nothing; however, God is a debtor to no man.

2. That they had been often before in similar distress, had often smarted for a time under the tyranny of their task-masters, and therefore it was a pity that they should now be left always in the hand of these oppressors (v. 4): “*My people went down into Egypt*, in an amicable way to settle there; but they enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour.” And then they were delivered, notwithstanding the pride, and power, and policies of Pharaoh. And why may we not think God will deliver his people now? At other

times *the Assyrian oppressed* the people of God *without cause*, as when the ten tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria; soon afterwards Sennacherib, another Assyrian, with a destroying army oppressed and made himself master of all the defenced cities of Judah. The Babylonians might not unfitly be called *Assyrians*, their monarchy being a branch of the Assyrians; and they now oppressed them without cause. Though God was righteous in delivering them into their hands, they were unrighteous in using them as they did, and could not pretend a dominion over them as their subjects, as Pharaoh might when they were settled in Goshen, part of his kingdom. When we suffer by the hands of wicked and unreasonable men it is some comfort to be able to say that as to them it is without cause, that we have not given them any provocation, <sup><100B></sup>Psalm 7:3-5, etc.

**3.** That God's glory suffered by the injuries that were done to his people (v. 5): *What have I here*, what do I get by it, *that my people are taken away for nought?* God is not worshipped as he used to be in Jerusalem, his altar there is gone and his temple in ruins; but if, in lieu of that, he were more and better worshipped in Babylon, either by the captives or by the natives, it were another matter — God might be looked upon as in some respects a gainer in his honour by it; but, alas! it is not so.

**(1.)** The captives are so dispirited that they cannot praise him; instead of this they are continually howling, which grieves him and moves his pity; *Those that rule over them make them to howl*, as the Egyptians of old made them to sigh, <sup><102B></sup>Exodus 2:23. So the Babylonians now, using them more hardly, extorted from them louder complaints and made them to howl. This gives us no pleasing idea of the temper the captives were now in; their complaints were not so rational and pious as they should have been, but brutish rather; they *howled*, <sup><374></sup>Hosea 7:14. However God heard them, and came down to deliver them, as he did out of Egypt, <sup><107></sup>Exodus 3:7, 8.

**(2.)** The natives are so insolent that they will not praise him, but, instead of that, they are continually blaspheming, which affronts him and moves his anger. They boasted that they were too hard for God because they were too hard for his people, and set him at defiance, as unable to deliver them, and thus his *name continually every day was blasphemed among them*. When they praised their own idols they *lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven*, <sup><163></sup>Daniel 5:23. “Now,” says God, “this is not to be

suffered. I will go down to deliver them; for what honour, what rent, what tribute of praise have I from the world, when my people, who should be to me for a name and praise, are to me for a reproach? For their oppressors will neither praise God themselves nor let them do it.” The apostle quotes this with application to the wicked lives of the Jews, by which God was dishonoured among the Gentiles then, as much as now he was by their sufferings, <sup><1023></sup>Romans 2:23, 24.

**4.** That his glory would be greatly manifested by their deliverance (v. 6): “*Therefore, because my name is thus blasphemed, I will arise, and my people shall know my name, my name Jehovah.*” By this name he had made himself known in delivering them out of Egypt, <sup><1018></sup>Exodus 6:3. God will do something to vindicate his own honour, something for his great name; and his people, who have almost lost the knowledge of it, shall know it to their comfort and shall find it their strong tower. They shall know that God's providence governs the world, and all the affairs of it, that it is he who speaks deliverance for them by the word of his power, that it is he only, who at first spoke and it was done. They shall know that God's word, which Israel is blessed with above other nations, shall without fail have its accomplishment in due season, that it is he who speaks by the prophet; it is he, and they do not speak of themselves; for not one iota or title of what they say shall fall to the ground.

## <sup><2810></sup>ISAIAH 52:7-12

### THE APPROACH OF THE MESSIAH

The removal of the Jews from Babylon to their own land again is here spoken of both as a mercy and as a duty; and the application of v. 7 to the preaching of the gospel (by the apostle, <sup><1015></sup>Romans 10:15) plainly intimates that that deliverance was a type and figure of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, to which what is here said of their redemption out of Babylon ought to be accommodated.

**I.** It is here spoken of as a great blessing, which ought to be welcomed with abundance of joy and thankfulness.

**1.** Those that bring the tidings of their release shall be very acceptable (v. 7): “*How beautiful upon the mountains, the mountains round about*

Jerusalem, over which these messengers are seen coming at a distance, *how beautiful are their feet*, when it is known what tidings they bring!” It is not meant so much of the common posts, or the messengers sent express by the government to disperse the proclamation, but rather of some of the Jews themselves, who, being at the fountain-head of intelligence, had early notice of it, and immediately went themselves, or sent their own messengers, to all parts, to disperse the news, and even to Jerusalem itself, to tell the few who remained there that their brethren would be with them shortly; for it is published not merely as matter of news, but as a proof that Zion's God reigns, for in that language it is published: they say unto Zion, *Thy God reigns*. Those who bring the tidings of peace and salvation, that Cyrus has given orders for the release of the Jews, tidings which were so long expected by those that waited for the consolation of Israel, those *good tidings* (so the original reads it, without the tautology of our translation, *good tidings of good*), put this construction upon it, *O Zion! thy God reigns*. Note, When bad news is abroad this is good news, and when good news is abroad this is the best news, that Zion's God reigns, that God is Zion's God, in covenant with her, and as such he reigns, <sup><3818></sup>Psalm 146:10; <sup><3809></sup>Zechariah 9:9. *The Lord has founded Zion*, <sup><3842></sup>Isaiah 14:32. All events have their rise in the disposals of the kingdom of his providence and their tendency to the advancement of the kingdom of his grace. This must be applied to the preaching of the gospel, which is a proclamation of peace and salvation; it is gospel indeed, good news, glad tidings, tidings of victory over our spiritual enemies and liberty from our spiritual bondage. The good news is that the Lord Jesus reigns and all power is given to him. Christ himself brought these tidings first (<sup><4018></sup>Luke 4:18, <sup><3818></sup>Hebrews 2:3), and of him the text speaks: *How beautiful are his feet!* his feet that were nailed to the cross, how beautiful upon Mount Calvary! his feet when he came *leaping upon the mountains* (<sup><2118></sup>Song of Solomon 2:8), how beautiful were they to those who knew his voice and knew it to be the voice of their beloved! His ministers proclaim these good tidings; they ought to keep their feet clean from the pollutions of the world, and then they ought to be beautiful in the eyes of those to whom they are sent, who sit at their feet, or rather at Christ's in them, to hear his word. They must be *esteemed in love for their work's sake* (<sup><3113></sup>1 Thessalonians 5:13), for their message sake, which is well worthy of all acceptance.

**2.** Those to whom the tidings are brought shall be put thereby into a transport of joy.

(1.) Zion's watchmen shall then rejoice because they are surprisingly illuminated, v. 8. The watchmen on Jerusalem's walls shall lead the chorus in this triumph. Who they were we are told, <sup><316></sup>Isaiah 62:6. They were such as God set on the walls of Jerusalem, to make mention of his name, and to continue instant in prayer to him, till he again *made Jerusalem a praise in the earth*. These watchmen stand upon their watch-tower, waiting for an answer to their prayers (<sup><311></sup>Habakkuk 2:1); and therefore when the good news comes they have it first, and the longer they have continued and the more importunate they have been in praying for it the more will they be elevated when it comes: They shall *lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing* in concert, to invite others to join with them in their praises. And that which above all things will transport them with pleasure is that *they shall see eye to eye*, that is, face to face. Whereas God had been a God hiding himself, and they could scarcely discern any thing of his favour through the dark cloud of their afflictions, now that the cloud is scattered they shall plainly see it. They shall see *Zion's king eye to eye*; so it was fulfilled when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and there were those that *saw his glory* (<sup><314></sup>John 1:14) *and looked upon it*, <sup><311></sup>1 John 1:1. They shall see an exact agreement and correspondence between the prophecy and the event, the promise and the performance; they shall see how they look one upon another eye to eye, and be satisfied that the same God spoke the one and did the other. When the Lord shall bring again Zion out of her captivity the prophets shall thence receive and give fuller discoveries than ever of God's good-will to his people. Applying this also, as the foregoing verse, to gospel times, it is a promise of the pouring out of the Spirit upon gospel ministers, as a spirit of wisdom and revelation, to lead them into all truth, so that they shall see eye to eye, shall see God's grace more clearly than the Old-Testament saints could see it: and they shall herein be unanimous; in these great things concerning the common salvation they shall concur in their sentiments as well as their songs. Nay, St. Paul seems to allude to this when he makes it the privilege of our future state that *we shall see face to face*.

(2.) Zion's waste places shall then rejoice because they shall be surprisingly comforted (v. 9): *Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem*; that is, all parts of Jerusalem, for it was all in ruins, and even those parts that seemed to lie most desolate shall share in the joy; and they, having little expected it, shall break forth into joy, as

men that dream, <sup><406></sup>Psalm 126:1, 2. Let them sing together. Note, Those that share in mercies ought to join in praises. Here is matter for joy and praise.

[1.] God's people will have the comfort of this salvation; and what is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. *He has redeemed Jerusalem* (the inhabitants of Jerusalem that were sold into the hands of their enemies) and thereby he has *comforted his people* that were in sorrow. The redemption of Jerusalem is the joy of all God's people, whose character it is that they look for that redemption, <sup><428></sup>Luke 2:38.

[2.] God will have the glory of it, v. 10. *He has made bare his holy arm* (manifested and displayed his power) *in the eyes of all the nations*. God's arm is a holy arm, stretched out in purity and justice, in defence of holiness and in pursuance of his promise.

[3.] All the world will have the benefit of it. In the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus the *arm of the Lord was revealed and all the ends of the earth were made to see the great salvation*, not as spectators of it only, as they saw the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, but as sharers in it; some of all nations, the most remote, shall partake of the benefits of the redemption. This is applied to our salvation by Christ. <sup><436></sup>Luke 3:6, *All flesh shall see the salvation of God, that great salvation*.

**II.** It is here spoken of as a great business, which ought to be managed with abundance of care and circumspection. When the liberty is proclaimed,

**1.** Let the people of God hasten out of Babylon with all convenient speed; though they are ever so well settled there, let them not think of taking root in Babylon, but *Depart, depart* (v. 11), *go out from the midst of her*; not only those that are in the borders, but those that are in the midst, in the heart of the country, let them be gone. Babylon is no place for Israelites. As soon as they have leave to let go, let them lose no time. With this word God stirred up the spirits of those that were moved to go up, <sup><415></sup>Ezra 1:5. And it is a call to all those who are yet in the bondage of sin and Satan to make use of the liberty which Christ has proclaimed to them. And, if the Son *make them free, they shall be free indeed*.

**2.** Let them take heed of carrying away with them any of the pollutions of Babylon: *Touch no unclean thing*. Now that God makes bare his holy arm for you, *be you holy as he is, and keep yourselves from every wicked thing*.

When they came out of Egypt they brought with them the idolatrous customs of Egypt (<sup><323></sup>Ezekiel 23:3), which were their ruin; let them take heed of doing so now that they come out of Babylon. Note, When we are receiving any special mercy from God we ought more carefully than ever to watch against all impurity. But especially let those be *clean* who *bear the vessels of the Lord*, that is, the priests, who had the charge of the vessels of the sanctuary (when they were restored by a particular grant) to carry them to Jerusalem, (<sup><310></sup>Ezra 1:7; 8:24, etc. Let them not only avoid touching any unclean thing, but be very careful to *cleanse themselves according to the purification of the sanctuary*. Christians are made to our God spiritual priests, (<sup><606></sup>Revelation 1:6. They are to bear the vessels of the Lord, are entrusted to keep the ordinances of God pure and entire; it is a good thing that is committed to them, and they ought to be clean, to wash their hands in innocency and so to compass God's altars and carry his vessels, and keep themselves pure.

**3.** Let them depend upon the presence of God with them and his protection in their removal (v. 12): *You shall not go out with haste*. They were to go with a diligent haste, not to lose time nor linger as Lot in Sodom, but they were not to go with a diffident distrustful haste, as if they were afraid of being pursued (as when they came out of Egypt) or of having the orders for their release recalled and countermanded: no, they shall find that, as for God, his work is perfect, and therefore they need not make more haste than good speed. Cyrus shall give them an honourable discharge, and they shall have an honourable return, and not steal away; *for the Lord will go before them* as their general and commander-in-chief, *and the God of Israel will be their rearward*, or he that will gather up those that are left behind. God will both lead their van and bring up their rear; he will secure them from enemies that either meet them or follow them, for with his favour will he compass them. The pillar of cloud and fire, when they came out of Egypt, sometimes went behind them, to secure their rear (<sup><249></sup>Exodus 14:19), and God's presence with them would now be that to them which that pillar was a visible token of. Those that are in the way of their duty are under God's special protection; and he that believes this will not make haste.

## ~~2373~~ ISAIAH 52:13-15

### THE HUMILIATION OF THE MESSIAH

Here, as in other places, for the confirming of the faith of God's people and the encouraging of their hope in the promises of temporal deliverances, the prophet passes from them to speak of the great salvation which should in the fulness of time be wrought out by the Messiah. As the prophecy of Christ's incarnation was intended for the ratification of the promise of their deliverance from the Assyrian army, so this of Christ's death and resurrection is to confirm the promise of their return out of Babylon; for both these salvations were typical of the great redemption and the prophecies of them had a reference to that. This prophecy, which begins here and is continued to the end of the next chapter, points as plainly as can be at Jesus Christ; the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it, and some of ours (no friends therein to the Christian religion) will have it understood of Jeremiah; but Philip, who hence preached Christ to the eunuch, has put it past dispute that *of him speaks the prophet this*, of him and of no other man, ~~4081~~ Acts 8:34, 35. Here,

**I.** God owns Christ to be both commissioned and qualified for his undertaking.

**1.** He is appointed to it. "He is *my servant*, whom I employ and therefore will uphold." In his undertaking he does his Father's will, seeks his Father's honour, and serves the interests of his Father's kingdom.

**2.** He is qualified for it. He *shall deal prudently*, for the *spirit of wisdom and understanding shall rest upon him*, ~~2310~~ Isaiah 11:2. The word is used concerning David when he *behaved himself wisely*, ~~9834~~ 1 Samuel 18:14. Christ is wisdom itself, and, in the contriving and carrying on the work of our redemption, there appeared much of *the wisdom of God in a mystery*, ~~4000~~ 1 Corinthians 2:7. Christ, when he was here upon earth, dealt very prudently, to the admiration of all.

**II.** He gives a short prospect both of his humiliation and his exaltation. See here,

**1.** How he humbled himself: *Many were astonished at him*, as they were at David when by reason of his sorrows and troubles he became a *wonder unto many*, <sup><370></sup>Psalm 71:7. Many wondered to see what base usage he met with, how inveterate people were against him, how inhuman, and what indignities were done him: *His visage was marred more than any man's* when he was buffeted, smitten on the cheek, and crowned with thorns, and *hid not his face from shame and spitting. His face was foul with weeping*, for he was *a man of sorrows*; he that really was *fairer than the children of men* had his face spoiled with the abuses that were done him. Never was man used so barbarously; his form, when he took upon him *the form of a servant*, was more mean and abject than that of any of the sons of men. Those that saw him said, "Surely never man looked so miserably, *a worm and no man*," <sup><326></sup>Psalm 22:6. *The nation abhorred him* (<sup><301></sup>Isaiah 49:7), treated him as the *off-scouring of all things. Never was sorrow like unto his sorrow*.

**2.** How highly God exalted him, and exalted him because he humbled himself. Three words are used for this (v. 13): *He shalt be exalted and extolled and be very high*. God shall exalt him, men shall extol him, and with both he shall be very high, higher than the highest, higher than the heavens. He shall prosper in his work, and succeed in it, and that shall raise him very high.

**(1.)** Many nations shall be the better for him, for *he shall sprinkle them*, and not the Jews only; the blood of sprinkling shall be applied to their consciences, to purify them. He suffered, and died, and so sprinkled many nations; for in his death there was *a fountain opened*, <sup><331></sup>Zechariah 13:1. He shall sprinkle many nations by his heavenly doctrine, which shall drop as the rain and distil as the dew. Moses's did so only on one nation (<sup><332></sup>Deuteronomy 32:2), but Christ's on many nations. He shall do it by baptism, which is the washing of the body with pure water, <sup><312></sup>Hebrews 10:22. So that this promise had its accomplishment when Christ sent his apostles to disciple all nations, by baptizing or sprinkling them.

**(2.)** The great ones of the nation shall show him respect: *Kings shall shut their mouths at him*, that is, they shall not open their mouths against him, as they have done, to contradict and blaspheme his sacred oracles; nay, they shall acquiesce in, and be well pleased with, the methods he takes of setting up his kingdom in the world; they shall with great humility and reverence receive his oracles and laws, as those who, when they heard

Job's wisdom, *after his speech spoke not again*, <sup><890></sup>Job 29:9, 22. *Kings shall see and arise*, <sup><240></sup>Isaiah 49:7.

(3.) The mystery which was kept secret from the beginning of the world shall by him be *made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*, as the apostle speaks, <sup><65></sup>Romans 16:25, 26. *That which had not been told them shall they see*; the gospel brings to light things new and unheard of, which will awaken the attention and engage the reverence of kings and kingdoms. This is applied to the preaching of the gospel in the Gentile world, <sup><65></sup>Romans 15:21. These words are there quoted according to the Septuagint translation: *To whom he was not spoken of they shall see, and those that have not heard shall understand*. As the things revealed had long been kept secret, so the persons to whom they were revealed had long been kept in the dark; but now they shall see and consider the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, which before they had not been told of — *they had not heard*. That shall be discovered to them by the gospel of Christ which could never be told them by all the learning of their philosophers, or the art of their diviners, or any of their pagan oracles. Much had been said in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah; much had been told them, and they had heard it. But, as the queen of Sheba found concerning Solomon, what they shall see in him, when he comes, shall far exceed what had been told them. Christ disappointed the expectations of those who looked for a Messiah according to their fancies, as the carnal Jews, but outdid theirs who looked for such a Messiah as was promised. According to their faith, nay, and beyond it, it was to them.