

CHAPTER 65

We are now drawing towards the conclusion of this evangelical prophecy, the last two chapters of which direct us to look as far forward as the new heavens and the new earth, the new world which the gospel dispensation should bring in, and the separation that should by it be made between the precious and the vile. “For judgment” (says Christ) “have I come into this world.” And why should it seem absurd that the prophet here should speak of that to which all the prophets bore witness? ~~400~~¹ Peter 1:10, 11. The rejection of the Jews, and the calling in of the Gentiles, are often mentioned in the New Testament as that which was foreseen and foretold by the prophets, ~~400~~ Acts 10:43; 13:40; ~~516~~ Romans 16:26. In this chapter we have,

- I.** The anticipating of the Gentiles with the gospel call (v. 10).
- II.** The rejection of the Jews for their obstinacy and unbelief (v. 2-7).
- III.** The saving of a remnant of them by bringing them into the gospel church (v. 8-10).
- IV.** The judgments of God that should pursue the rejected Jews (v. 11-16).
- V.** The blessings reserved for the Christian church, which should be its joy and glory (v. 17-25). But these things are here prophesied of under the type and figure of the difference God would make between some and others of the Jews after their return out of captivity, between those that feared God and those that did not, with reproofs of the sins then found among them and promises of the blessings then in reserve for them.

~~281~~ **ISAIAH 65:1-7**

THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS

The apostle Paul (an expositor we may depend upon) has given us the true sense of these verses, and told us what was the event they pointed at and were fulfilled in, namely, the calling in of the Gentiles and the rejection of

the Jews, by the preaching of the gospel, ^{<4510>}Romans 10:20, 21. And he observes that herein *Esaias is very bold*, not only in foretelling a thing so improbable ever to be brought about, but in foretelling it to the Jews, who would take it as a gross affront to their nation, and therein Moses's words would be made good (^{<4622>}Deuteronomy 32:21), *I will provoke you to jealousy by those that are no people*.

I. It is here foretold that the Gentiles, who had been afar off, should be made nigh, v. 1. Paul reads it thus: *I was found of those that sought me not; I was made manifest to those that asked not for me*. Observe what a wonderful and blessed change was made with them and how they were surprised into it.

1. Those who had long been without God in the world shall now be set a seeking him; those who had not said, *Where is God my maker?* shall now begin to enquire after him. Neither they nor their fathers had called upon his name, but either lived without prayer or prayed to stocks and stones, the work of men's hands. But now they shall *be baptized and call on the name of the Lord*, ^{<4422>}Acts 2:21. With what pleasure does the great God here speak of his being sought unto, and how does he glory in it, especially by those who in time past had not asked for him! For there is joy in heaven over great sinners who repent.

2. God shall anticipate their prayers with his blessings: *I am found of those that sought me not*. This happy acquaintance and correspondence between God and the Gentile world began on his side; they came to know God because they were *known of him* (^{<4409>}Galatians 4:9), to seek God and find him because they were first sought and found of him. Though in after-communion God is found of those that seek him (^{<3087>}Proverbs 8:17), yet in the first conversion he is found of those that seek him not; for *therefore we love him because he first loved us*. The design of the bounty of common providence to them was *that they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him*, ^{<4472>}Acts 17:27. But they sought him not; still he was to them *an unknown God*, and yet God was found of them.

3. God gave the advantages of a divine revelation to those who had never made a profession of religion: *I said, Behold me, behold me* (gave them a sight of me and invited them to take the comfort and benefit of it) to those who *were not called by my name*, as the Jews for many ages had been. When the apostles went about from place to place, preaching the gospel,

this was the substance of what they preached: “Behold God, behold him, turn towards him, fix the eyes of your minds upon him, acquaint yourselves with him, admire him, adore him; look off from your idols that you have made, and look upon the living God who made you.” Christ in them said, *Behold me, behold me* with an eye of faith; *look unto me, and be you saved*. And this was said to those that had long been *lo-ammi*, and *lo-ruhamah* (³⁰¹⁸Hosea 1:8, 9), *not a people*, and that *had not obtained mercy*, ⁴⁰²⁵Romans 9:25, 26.

II. It is here foretold that the Jews, who had long been a people near to God, should be cast off and set at a distance v. 2. The apostle applies this to the Jews in his time, as a seed of evil-doers. ⁴⁰²¹Romans 10:21, *But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people*. Here observe,

1. How the Jews were courted to the divine grace. God himself, by his prophets, by his Son, by his apostles, *stretched forth his hands to them*, as Wisdom did, ³⁰²³Proverbs 1:24. God *spread out his hands to them*, as one reasoning and expostulating with them, not only beckoned to them with the finger, but *spread out his hands*, as being ready to embrace and entertain them, reaching forth the tokens of his favour to them, and importuning them to accept them. When Christ was crucified his hands were *spread out and stretched forth*, as if he were preparing to receive returning sinners into his bosom; and this *all the day*, all the gospel-day. He waited to be gracious, and was not weary of waiting; even those that came in at the eleventh hour of the day were not rejected.

2. How they contemned the invitation; it was given to a rebellious and gainsaying people; they were invited to the wedding-supper, and would not come, but *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*. Now here we have,

(1.) The bad character of this people. The world shall see that it was not for nothing that they were rejected of God; no, it was for their whoredoms that they were put away.

[1.] Their character in general was such as one would not expect of those who had been so much the favourites of Heaven. *First*, They were very wilful. Right or wrong they would do as they had a mind. “They generally *walk on in a way that is not good*, not the right way, not a safe way, for they *walk after their own thought*, their own devices and desires.” If our

guide be our own thoughts, our way is not likely to be good; for *every imagination of the thought of our hearts is only evil*. God had told them his thoughts, what his mind and will were, but they would walk *after their own thoughts*, would do what they thought best. *Secondly*, They were very provoking. This was God's complaint of them all along — they grieved him, they *vexed his Holy Spirit*, as if they would contrive how to make him their enemy: They *provoke me to anger continually to my face*. They cared not what affront they gave to God, though it were in his sight and presence, in a downright contempt of his authority and defiance of his justice; and this *continually*; it had been their way and manner ever since they were a people, witness the *day of temptation in the wilderness*.

[2.] The prophet speaks more particularly of *their iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers*, as the ground of God's casting them off, v. 7. Now he gives instances of both.

First, The most provoking iniquity of their fathers was idolatry; this, the prophet tells them, was provoking God to his face; and it is an iniquity which, as appears by the second commandment, God often *visits upon the children*. This was the sin that brought them into captivity, and, though the captivity pretty well cured them of it, yet, when the final ruin of that nation came, that was again brought into the account against them; for in the day when God visits he will visit that, ^{<1234>}Exodus 32:34. Perhaps there were many, long after the captivity, who, though they did not worship other gods, were yet guilty of the disorders here mentioned; for they married strange wives.

1. They forsook God's temple, and *sacrificed in gardens or groves*, that they might have the satisfaction of doing it in their own way, for they liked not God's institutions.

2. They forsook God's altar, and *burnt incense upon bricks*, altars of their own contriving (they burnt incense according to their own inventions, which were of no more value, in comparison with God's institution, than an altar of bricks in comparison with the golden altar which God appointed them to burn incense on), or *upon tiles* (so some read it), such as they covered their flat-roofed houses with, and on them sometimes they burnt incense to their idols, as appears, ^{<1230>}2 Kings 23:12, where we read of altars *on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz*, and ^{<2453>}Jeremiah 19:13, of their burning incense to the host of heaven upon the roofs of their houses.

3. “They used necromancy, or consulting with the dead, and, in order to that, they *remained among the graves, and lodged in the monuments,*” to seek for the living to the dead (⁽²⁰⁸⁹⁾Isaiah 8:19), as the witch of Endor. Or they used to consult the evil spirits that haunted the sepulchres.

4. They violated the laws of God about their meat, and broke through the distinction between clean and unclean before it was taken away by the gospel. They *ate swine's flesh*. Some indeed chose rather to die than to eat swine's flesh, as Eleazar and the seven brethren in the story of the Maccabees; but it is probable that many ate of it, especially when it came to be a condition of life. In our Saviour's time we read of a vast herd of swine among them, which gives us cause to suspect that there were many then who made so little conscience of the law as to eat swine's flesh, for which they were justly punished in the destruction of the swine. *And the broth, or pieces, of other forbidden meats, called here abominable things, was in their vessels, and was made use of for food.* The forbidden meat is called *an abomination*, and those that meddle with it are said to *make themselves abominable*, ⁽²¹¹⁰⁾Leviticus 11:42, 43. Those that durst not eat the meat yet made bold with the broth, because they would come as near as might be to that which was forbidden, to show how they coveted the forbidden fruit. Perhaps this is here put figuratively for all forbidden pleasures and profits which are obtained by sin, that *abominable thing which the Lord hates*; they loved to be dallying with it, to be tasting of its broth. But those who thus take a pride in venturing upon the borders of sin, and the brink of it, are in danger of falling into the depths of it. But,

Secondly, The most provoking iniquity of the Jews in our Saviour's time was their pride and hypocrisy, that sin of the scribes and Pharisees against which Christ denounced so many woes, v. 5. They say, “*Stand by thyself, keep off*” (*get thee to thine*, so the original is); “*keep to thy own companions, but come not near to me, lest thou pollute me; touch me not; I will not allow thee any familiarity with me, for I am holier than thou, and therefore thou art not good enough to converse with me; I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican.*” This they were ready to say to every one they met with, so that, in saying, *I am holier than thou*, they thought themselves holier than any, not only very good, as good as they should be, as good as they needed to be, but better than any of their neighbours. *These are a smoke in my nose* (says God), such a smoke as comes not from a quick fire, which soon becomes glowing and pleasant, but from a fire of wet wood, which *burns all the day*, and is nothing but

smoke. Note, Nothing in men is more odious and offensive to God than a proud conceit of themselves and contempt of others; for commonly those are most unholy of all that think themselves holier than any.

(2.) The controversy God had with them for this. The proof against them is plain: *Behold, it is written before me*, v. 6. It is written, to be remembered against them in time to come; for they may not perhaps be immediately reckoned with. The sins of sinners, and particularly the vainglorious boasts and scorns of hypocrites, are *laid up in store* with God, ^{<623>}Deuteronomy 32:34. And what is written shall be read and proceeded upon: “*I will not keep silence* always, though I may keep silence long.” They shall not think him altogether such a one as themselves, as sometimes they have done; but *he will recompense, even recompense into their bosom*. Those basely abuse religion, that honourable and sacred thing, who make their profession of it the matter of their pride, and the jealous God will reckon with them for it; the profession they boast of shall but serve to aggravate their condemnation.

[1.] The *iniquity of their fathers* shall come against them; not but that their own sin deserved whatever judgments God brought upon them, and much heavier; and this they owned, ^{<193>}Ezra 9:13. But God would not have wrought so great a desolation upon them if he had not therein had an eye to the sins of their fathers. Therefore in the last destruction of Jerusalem God is said to bring upon them the blood of the Old-Testament martyrs, even that of *Abel*, ^{<425>}Matthew 23:35. God will reckon with them, not only for their fathers' idols, but for their *high places*, their *burning incense upon the mountains and the hills*, though perhaps it was to the true God only. This was blaspheming or reproaching God; it was a reflection upon the choice he had made of the place where he would record his name, and the promise he had made that there he would meet them and bless them.

[2.] Their own with that shall bring ruin upon them: *Your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers* together, the one aggravating the other, constitute the former work, which, though it may seem to be overlooked and forgotten, shall be *measured into their bosom*. God will render into the bosom, not only of his open enemies (^{<392>}Psalms 79:12), but of his false and treacherous friends, *the reproach wherewith they have reproached him*.

ISAIAH 65:8-10

PROMISES OF MERCY

This is expounded by St. *Paul*, ^{<510>}Romans 11:1-5, where, when, upon occasion of the rejection of the Jews, it is asked, *Hath God then cast away his people?* he answers, No; for *at this time there is a remnant according to the election of grace*. This prophecy has reference to that distinguished remnant. When that hypocritical nation is to be destroyed God will separate and secure to himself some from among them; some of the Jews shall be brought to embrace the Christian faith, shall be added to the church, and so be saved. And our Saviour has told us that *for the sake of these elect* the days of the destruction of the Jews should be shortened, and a stop put to the desolation, which otherwise would have proceeded to such a degree that *no flesh should be saved*, ^{<422>}Matthew 24:22. Now,

I. This is illustrated here by a comparison, v. 8. When a vine is so blasted and withered that there seems to be no sap nor life in it, and therefore the dresser of the vineyard is inclined to pluck it up or cut it down, yet, if ever so little of the juice of the grape, fit to make new wine, be found, though but in one cluster, a stander-by interposes, and says, *Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it*; there is life in the root, and hope that yet it may become good for something. Good men are blessings to the places where they live; and sometimes God spares whole cities and nations for the sake of a few such in them. How ambitious should we be of this honor, not only to be distinguished from others, but serviceable to others!

II. Here is a description of those that shall make up this saved saving remnant.

1. They are such as serve God. It is *for my servants' sake* (v. 8), and they are *my servants* that *shall dwell there*, v. 9. God's faithful servants, however they are looked upon, are the best friends their country has; and those who serve him do therein *serve their generation*.

2. They are such as seek God, make it the end of their lives to glorify God and the business of their lives to call upon him. It is *for my people that have sought me*. Those that seek God shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful rewarder.

III. Here is an account of the mercy God has in store for them. The remnant that shall return out of captivity shall have a happy settlement again in their own land, and that by an hereditary right, as *a seed out of Jacob*, in whom the family is kept up and the entail preserved, and from whom, as from the seed sown, shall spring a numerous increase; and these typify the remnant of Jacob that shall be incorporated into the gospel church by faith.

1. They shall have a good portion for themselves. They shall inherit *my mountains*, the holy mountains on which Jerusalem and the temple were built, or the mountains of Canaan, *the land of promise*, typifying the covenant of grace, which all God's servants, his elect, both inhabit and inherit; they make it their refuge, their rest and residence, so they dwell in it, are at home in it; and they have taken it to be their heritage for ever, and it shall be to them an inheritance incorruptible. God's chosen, the spiritual seed of praying Jacob, shall be the inheritors of his mountains of bliss and joy, and shall be carried safely to them through the vale of tears.

2. They shall have a green pasture for their flocks, v. 10. *Sharon and the valley of Achor* shall again be as well replenished as ever they were with cattle. Sharon lay westward, near Joppa; Achor lay eastward, near Jordan. It is therefore intimated that they shall recover the possession of the whole land, that they shall have wherewith to stock it all, and that they shall peaceably enjoy it and there shall be none to disturb them nor make them afraid. Gospel-ordinances are the fields and valleys where the sheep of Christ *shall go in and out and find pasture* (~~610~~ John 10:9), and where they are *made to lie down* (~~421~~ Psalm 23:2), as Israel's herds in *the valley of Achor*, ~~2025~~ Hosea 2:15.

~~251~~ ISAIAH 65:11-16

PREDICTIONS OF PUNISHMENT

Here the different states of the godly and wicked, of the Jews that believed and of those that still persisted in unbelief, are set the one over-against the other, as life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse.

I. Here is the fearful doom of those that persisted in their idolatry after the deliverance out of Babylon, and in infidelity after the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Observe,

1. What the doom is that is here threatened: “*I will number you to the sword as sheep for the slaughter, and there shall be no escaping, no standing out; you shall all bow down to it,*” v. 12. God’s judgments come,

(1.) Regularly, and are executed according to the commission. Those fall by the sword that are numbered or counted out to it, and none besides. Though the sword seems to devour promiscuously *one as well as another*, yet it is made to know its number and shall not exceed.

(2.) Irresistibly. The strongest and most stout-hearted sinners shall be forced to bow before them; for none ever hardened their hearts against God and prospered.

2. What the sins are that number them to the sword.

(1.) Idolatry was the ancient sin (v. 11): “*You are those who, instead of seeking me and serving me as my people, forsake the Lord, disown him, and cast him off to embrace other gods, who forget my holy mountain (the privileges it confers and the obligations it lays you under) to burn incense upon the mountains of your idols (v. 7), and have deserted the one only living and true God.*” They *prepared a table for that troop of deities* which the heathen worship and *poured out drink-offerings to that* numberless number of them; for those that thought one God too little never thought scores and hundreds sufficient, but were still adding to the number of them, till they had as many gods as cities and their altars were as thick as *heaps in the furrows of the field*, ^{<321>}Hosea 12:11. Some take *Gad* and *Meni*, which we translate *a troop* and *a number*, to be the proper names of two of their idols, answering to Jupiter and Mercury. Whatever they were, their worshippers spared no cost to do them honour; they prepared a table for them, and filled out mixed wine for drink-offerings to them; they would pinch their families rather than stint their devotions, which should shame the worshippers of the true God out of their niggardliness.

(2.) Infidelity was the sin of the later Jews (v. 12): *When I called, you did not answer*, which refers to the same that v. 2 did (*I have stretched out my hands to a rebellious people*), and that is applied to those who rejected the gospel. Our Lord Jesus himself called (he *stood and cried*, ^{<417>}John 7:37),

but they did not hear, they would not answer; they were not convinced by his reasonings nor moved by his expostulations; both the fair warnings he gave them of death and ruin and the fair offers he made them of life and happiness were slighted and made no impression upon them. Yet this was not all: *You did evil before my eyes*, not by surprise, or through inadvertency, but with deliberation: *You did choose that wherein I delighted not*; he means that which he utterly detested and abhorred. It is not strange that those who will not be persuaded to choose that which is good persist in their choice and pursuit of that which is evil. See the malignity of sin; it is evil in God's eyes, highly offensive to him, and yet it is committed before his eyes, in his sight and presence, and in contempt of him; it is likewise a contradiction to the will of God; it is doing that, of choice, which we know will displease him.

II. The aggravation of this doom, from the consideration of the happy state of those that were brought to repentance and faith.

1. The blessedness of those that serve God, and the woeful condition of those that rebel against him, are here set the *one over-against the other*, that they may serve as a foil to each other, v. 13-16.

(1.) God's servants may well think themselves happy, and for ever indebted to that free grace which made them so, when they see how miserable some of their neighbours are for want of that grace, who are hardened, and likely to perish for ever in unbelief, and what a narrow escape they had of being among them. See ^{<21624>}Isaiah 66:24.

(2.) It will add to the grief of those that perish to see the happiness of God's servants (whom they had hated, and vilified, and looked upon with the utmost disdain), and especially to think that they might have shared in their bliss if it had not been their own fault. It made the torment of the rich man in hell the more grievous that he *saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom*, ^{<21623>}Luke 16:23. See ^{<21638>}Luke 13:28. Sometimes the providence of God makes such a difference as this between good and bad in this world, and the prosperity of the righteous becomes a grievous eyesore and vexation of heart to the wicked (^{<21620>}Psalm 112:10), and it will certainly be so in the great day. *We fools counted his life madness and his end without honour; but now how is he numbered with the saints and his lot is among the chosen.* Now,

2. The difference of their states lies in two things: —

(1.) In point of comfort and satisfaction.

[1.] God's servants shall eat and drink; they shall have the bread of life to feed, to feast upon, continually, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, and shall want nothing that is good for them. Heaven's happiness will be to them an everlasting feast; they shall be filled with that which now they hunger and thirst after. But those who set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in that, shall be hungry and thirsty, always empty, always craving; for it is not bread; it surfeits, but it satisfies not. In communion with God, and dependence upon him, there is full satisfaction; but in sinful pursuits there is nothing but disappointment.

[2.] God's servants *shall rejoice* and sing for joy of heart. They have constant cause for joy, and there is nothing that may be an occasion of grief to them but they have an allay sufficient for it; and, as far as faith is in act and exercise, they have a heart to rejoice, and their joy is their strength. They shall rejoice in their hope, because it shall not make them ashamed. Heaven will be a world of everlasting joy to all that are now sowing in tears. But, on the other hand, those that forsake the Lord shut themselves out from all true joy, for *they shall be ashamed* of their vain confidence in themselves, and their own righteousness, and the hopes they had built thereon. When the expectations of bliss wherewith they had flattered themselves are frustrated, O what confusion will fill their faces! Then shall they *cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit*, perhaps in this world, when their laughter shall be turned into mourning and their joy into heaviness, and certainly in that world where the torment will be endless, easeless, and remediless — nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, to eternity. Let these two be compared, *Now he is comforted and thou art tormented*, and which of the two will we choose to take our lot with?

(2.) In point of honour and reputation, v. 15, 16. *The memory of the just is, and shall be, blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.*

[1.] The name of the idolaters and unbelievers shall be left *for a curse*, shall be loaded with ignominy and made for ever infamous. It shall be used in giving bad characters — *Thou art as cruel as a Jew*; and in imprecation — *God make thee as miserable as a Jew*. It shall be *for a curse to God's chosen*, that is, for a warning to them; they shall be afraid of falling under the curse upon the Jewish nation, of perishing after the

same example of unbelief. The curse of those whom God rejects should make his chosen stand in awe. *The Lord God shall slay thee; he shall quite extirpate the Jews and cut them off from being a people; they shall no longer live as a nation, nor ever be incorporated again.*

[2.] The name of God's chosen shall become a blessing: *He shall call his servants by another name.* The children of the covenant shall no longer be called *Jews*, but *Christians*; and to them, under that name, all the promises and privileges of the new covenant shall be secured. This other name shall be an honourable name; it shall not be confined to one nation, but with it men shall *bless themselves in the earth*, all the world over. God shall have servants out of all nations who shall all be dignified with this new name. They shall *bless themselves in the God of truth.* *First*, They shall give honour to God both in their prayers and in their solemn oaths, in their addresses for his favour as their felicity and their appeals to his justice as their Judge. This is a part of the homage we owe to God; we must *bless ourselves in him*, that is, we must reckon that we have enough to make us happy, that we need no more, and can desire no more, if we have him for our God. It is of great consequence what we *bless ourselves in*, what we most please ourselves with and value ourselves by our interest in. Worldly people *bless themselves in the abundance they have of this world's goods* (¹⁰⁸Psalm 49:18; ¹⁰⁹Luke 12:19); but God's servants *bless themselves in him*, as a God all-sufficient for them. He is their crown of glory and diadem of beauty, their strength and portion. By him also *they shall swear*, and not by any creature or any false god. To his judgment they shall refer their cause, from whom every man's judgment doth proceed. *Secondly*, They shall give honour to him as *the God of truth, the God of the Amen* (so the word is); some understand it of Christ who is himself the *Amen*, the *faithful witness* (¹¹⁰Revelation 3:14), and in whom all the promises are *yea and amen*, ¹¹¹2 Corinthians 1:20. In him we must *bless ourselves*, and by him we must swear unto the Lord and covenant with him. He that is *blessed in the earth* (so some read it) *shall be blessed in the true God*, for Christ is *the true God and eternal life*, ¹¹²1 John 5:20. And it was promised of old that *in him all the families of the earth should be blessed*, ¹¹³Genesis 12:3. Some read it, *He shall bless himself in the God of the faithful people*, in God as the God of all believers, desiring no more than to share in the blessings wherewith they are blessed, to be dealt with as he deals with them. *Thirdly*, They shall give him honour as the author of this blessed change which they have the experience of; they shall think

themselves happy in having him for their God who has made them to forget their former troubles, the remembrance of them being swallowed up in their present comforts: *Because they are hidden from God's eyes*, that is, they are quite taken away; for, if there were any remainder of their troubles, God would be sure to have his eye upon it, in compassion to them and concern for them. They shall no longer feel them; for God will no longer see them. He is pleased to speak as if he would make himself easy by making them easy; and therefore they shall with a great deal of satisfaction bless themselves in him.

~~257~~ ISAIAH 65:17-25

PREDICTIONS OF HAPPINESS

If these promises were in part fulfilled when the Jews, after their return out of captivity, were settled in peace in their own land and brought as it were into a new world, yet they were to have their full accomplishment in the gospel church, militant first and at length triumphant. *The Jerusalem that is from above is free and is the mother of us all*. In the graces and comforts which believers have in and from Christ we are to look for this new heaven and new earth. It is in the gospel that *old things have passed away and all things have become new*, and by it that those who are in Christ are *new creatures*, ~~407~~ 2 Corinthians 5:17. It was a mighty and happy change that was described v. 16, that *the former troubles were forgotten*; but here it rises much higher: even the *former world shall be forgotten and shall no more come into mind*. Those that were converted to the Christian faith were so transported with the comforts of it that all the comforts they were before acquainted with became as nothing to them; not only their foregoing griefs, but their foregoing joys, were lost and swallowed up in this. The glorified saints will *therefore* have forgotten this world, because they will be entirely taken up with the other: *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth*. See how inexhaustible the divine power is; the same God that created one heaven and earth can create another. See how entire the happiness of the saints is; it shall be all of a piece; with the new heavens God will create them (if they have occasion for it to make them happy) a new earth too. *The world is yours* if you be Christ's, ~~402~~ 1 Corinthians 3:22. When God is reconciled to us, which gives us a new heaven, the creatures too are reconciled to us, which gives us a new earth.

The future glory of the saints will be so entirely different from what they ever knew before that it may well be called *new heavens and a new earth*, ^{<613>}2 Peter 3:13. *Behold, I make all things new*, ^{<615>}Revelation 21:5.

I. There shall be new joys. For,

1. All the church's friends, and all that belong to her, shall rejoice (v. 18): You shall *be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create*. The new things which God creates in and by his gospel are and shall be matter of everlasting joy to all believers. *My servants shall rejoice* (v. 13), at last they shall, though now they mourn. *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*.

2. The church shall be the matter of their joy, so pleasant, so prosperous, shall her condition be: *I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy*. The church shall not only rejoice but be rejoiced in. Those that have sorrowed with the church shall rejoice with her.

3. The prosperity of the church shall be a rejoicing to God himself, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants (v. 19): *I will rejoice in Jerusalem's joy, and will joy in my people; for in all their affliction he was afflicted*. God will not only rejoice in the church's well-doing, but will himself *rejoice to do her good and rest in his love* to her, ^{<617>}Zephaniah 3:17. What God rejoices in it becomes us to rejoice in.

4. There shall be no allay of this joy, nor any alteration of this happy condition of the church: *The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her*. If this relate to any state of the church in this life, it means no more than that the former occasions of grief shall not return, but God's people shall long enjoy an uninterrupted tranquillity. But in heaven it shall have a full accomplishment, in respect both of the perfection and the perpetuity of the promised joy; there *all tears shall be wiped away*.

II. There shall be new life, v. 20. Untimely deaths by the sword or sickness shall be no more known as they have been, and by this means there shall be *no more the voice of crying*, v. 19. When there shall be *no more death* there shall be *no more sorrow*, ^{<614>}Revelation 21:4. As death has reigned by sin, so life shall reign by righteousness, ^{<614>}Romans 5:14, 21.

1. Believers through Christ shall be satisfied with life, though it be ever so short on earth. If an infant end its days quickly, yet it shall not be reckoned to die untimely; for the shorter its life is the longer will its rest be. Though

death reign over those that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, yet they, dying in the arms of Christ, the second Adam, and belonging to his kingdom, are not to be called *infants of days*, but even the child shall be reckoned to *die a hundred years old*, for he shall rise again at full age, shall rise to eternal life. Some understand it of children who in their childhood are so eminent for wisdom and grace, and by death nipped in the blossom, that they may be said to die a hundred years old. And, as for old men, it is promised that *they shall fill their days with the fruits of righteousness*, which they shall still bring forth in old age, to show that *the Lord is upright*, and then it is a good old age. An old man who is wise, and good, and useful, may truly be said to have *filled his days*. Old men who have their hearts upon the world have never filled their days, never have enough of this world, but would still continue longer in it. But that man dies old, and *satur dierum — full of days*, who, with Simeon, having seen God's salvation, desires now to depart in peace.

2. Unbelievers shall be unsatisfied and unhappy in life, though it be ever so long. The sinner, though he live to *a hundred years old*, shall be *accursed*. His living so long shall be no token to him of the divine favour and blessing, nor shall it be any shelter to him from the divine wrath and curse. The sentence he lies under will certainly be executed, and his long life is but a long reprieve; nay, it is itself a curse to him, for the longer he lives the more wrath he treasures up against the day of wrath and the more sins he will have to answer for. So that the matter is not great whether our lives on earth be long or short, but whether we live the lives of saints or the lives of sinners.

III. There shall be a new enjoyment of the comforts of life. Whereas before it was very uncertain and precarious, their enemies *inhabited the houses* which *they built* and *ate the fruit* of the trees which *they planted*, now it shall be otherwise; they shall *build houses and inhabit them*, shall *plant vineyards* and *eat the fruit of them*, v. 21, 22. Their intimates that the labour of their hands shall be blessed and be made to prosper; they shall gain what they aimed at, and what they have gained shall be preserved and secured to them; they shall enjoy it comfortably, and nothing shall embitter it to them, and they shall live to enjoy it long. Strangers shall not break in upon them, to expel them, and plant themselves in their room, as sometimes they have done: *My elect shall wear out, or long enjoy, the work of their hands*; it is honestly got, and it will wear well; it is *the work of their hands*, which they themselves have laboured for, and it is most

comfortable to enjoy that, and not to eat the *bread of idleness*, or *bread of deceit*. If we have a heart to enjoy it, that is the gift of God's grace (^{<2163>}Ecclesiastes 3:13); and, if we live to enjoy it long, it is the gift of God's providence, for that is here promised: *As the days of a tree are the days of my people; as the days of an oak* (^{<2163>}Isaiah 6:13), *whose substance is in it, though it cast its leaves*; though it be stripped every winter, it recovers itself again, and lasts many ages; as the days of *the tree of life*; so the Septuagint. Christ is to them the tree of life, and in him believers enjoy all those spiritual comforts which are typified by the abundance of temporal blessings here promised; and it shall not be in the power of their enemies to deprive them of these blessings or disturb them in the enjoyment of them.

IV. There shall be a new generation rising up in their stead to inherit and enjoy these blessings (v. 23): *They shall not labour in vain*, for they shall not only enjoy the work of their hands themselves, but they shall leave it with satisfaction to those that shall come after them, and not with such a melancholy prospect as Solomon did, (^{<2163>}Ecclesiastes 2:18, 19). They shall not beget and *bring forth children for trouble; for they are themselves the seed of the blessed of the Lord*, and there is a blessing entailed upon them by descent from their ancestors which *their offspring with them* shall partake of, and shall be, as well as they, *the seed of the blessed of the Lord*. They shall not bring forth for trouble; for,

1. God will make their children that rise up comforts to them; they shall have the joy of seeing them *walk in the truth*.
2. He will make the times that come after comfortable to their children. As they shall be good, so it shall be well with them; they shall not be brought forth to days of trouble; nor shall it ever be said, *Blessed is the womb that bore not*. In the gospel church Christ's name shall be borne up by a succession. *A seed shall serve him* (^{<4923>}Psalm 22:30), *the seed of the blessed of the Lord*.

V. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their God (v. 24): *Even before they call, I will answer*. God will anticipate their prayers with the blessings of his goodness. David did but say, *I will confess*, and *God forgave*, (^{<4815>}Psalm 32:5). The father of the prodigal met him in his return. *While they are yet speaking*, before they have finished their prayer, I will give them the thing they pray for, or the assurances and earnest of

it. These are high expressions of God's readiness to hear prayer; and this appears much more in the grace of the gospel than it did under the law; we owe the comfort of it to the mediation of Christ as our advocate with the Father and are obliged in gratitude to give a ready ear to God's calls.

VI. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their neighbours (v. 25): *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together*, as they did in Noah's ark. God's people, though they are as sheep in the midst of wolves, shall be safe and unhurt; for God will not so much break the power and tie the hands of their enemies as formerly, but he will turn their hearts, will alter their dispositions by his grace. When Paul, who had been a persecutor of the disciples (and who, being of the tribe of Benjamin, ravened *as a wolf*, ^{<0427>}Genesis 49:27) joined himself to them and became one of them, then *the wolf and the lamb fed together*. So also when the enmity between Jews and Gentiles was slain, all hostilities ceased, and they fed together as one sheepfold under Christ the great Shepherd, ^{<0106>}John 10:16. The enemies of the church ceased to do the mischief they had done, and its members ceased to be so quarrelsome with and injurious to one another as they had been, so that there was none either from without or from within to hurt or destroy, none to disturb it, much less to ruin it, *in all the holy mountain*; as was promised, ^{<2819>}Isaiah 11:9. For,

1. Men shall be changed: *The lion* shall no more be a beast of prey, as perhaps he never would have been if sin had not entered, but *shall eat straw like the bullock*, shall know his owner, and his master's crib, as the *ox* does. When those that lived by spoil and rapine, and coveted to enrich themselves, right or wrong, are brought by the grace of God to accommodate themselves to their condition, to live by honest labour, and to be content with such things as they have — when those that stole steal no more, but work with their hands the thing that is good — then this is fulfilled, that *the lion shall eat straw like the bullock*.

2. Satan shall be chained, the dragon bound; for *dust shall be the serpent's meat again*. That great enemy, when he has been let loose, has glutted and regaled himself with the precious blood of saints, who by his instigation have been persecuted, and with the precious souls of sinners, who by his instigation have become persecutors and have ruined themselves for ever; but now he shall be confined to dust, according to the sentence, *On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat*, ^{<0034>}Genesis 3:14. All the enemies of God's church, that are subtle and venomous as serpents, shall

be conquered and subdued, and be made to lick the dust, Christ shall reign as Zion's King till all the enemies of his kingdom be made his footstool, and theirs too. In the holy mountain above, and there only, shall this promise have its full accomplishment, that there shall be none to hurt nor destroy.